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INFANT BAPTISM.

L. B. SEELEY, WESTON GREEN, THAMES DITTON.

INFANT-BAPTISM
THE MEANS OF
NATIONAL REFORMATION
ACCORDING TO
THE DOCTRINE AND DISCIPLINE OF
THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH :

IN NINE LETTERS TO A FRIEND.

BY HENRY BUDD, M. A.

**CHAPLAIN OF BRIDEWELL HOSPITAL, MINISTER OF BRIDEWELL
PRECINCT, AND RECTOR OF WHITE ROOTHING, ESSEX.**

If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.—
Isa. vii. 9.

Be not afraid, only believe.—Mark v. 36.

Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief.—Mark ix. 24.

LONDON : PRINTED FOR L. B. SEELEY AND SON :
R. B. SEELEY AND BURNSIDE, FLEET STREET :
J. HATCHARD AND SON, PICCADILLY.

MDCCCXXVII.



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ANDREW HARVARD

TO

THE REV. EDWARD BICKERSTETH.

SECRETARY TO THE CHURCH MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

Concord

Appm

To improve a community of natural men, united for the common advantages of social life, into a Communion of Saints, enjoying the privileges, discharging the duties, and encouraging the hopes of the Gospel—is the highest object at which both the Statesman and Divine can aim, though they should live in the most refined condition of society upon earth.

It is with this view, I conceive, that the State has instituted our Ecclesiastical Establishment; and that it expects all—both Divine and Layman to concur in advancing the kingdom of “the Christ of God,” as the highest possible attainment that can make the subjects of the realm truly happy whether here or hereafter.

This kingdom of Christ is a spiritual kingdom; and does not proceed from any native moral power or goodness of man whatever: it

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is founded on the assumption of man's utter worthlessness and sinfulness before God : it is eminently the kingdom of PROMISE—a kingdom of mere mercy, and love, and grace, and peace.

On this principle, I conceive, in perfect consistency with the genuine Gospel of Christ, the Established Church of these realms is built. It is assumed that every child introduced into her communion, is introduced in virtue of the PROMISE made to the children of believers : on this ground the Parents and Sponsors present the Child ; on this ground the Church receives the Child into "the Communion of Saints ;" and on this ground she commits the responsibility of educating the Child to the Sponsors, as interested in all the privileges of the PROMISE. On this ground she instructs him in her Catechism ; on this she prepares him to be Confirmed by the Bishop ; on this he is interested in every subsequent formulary, and throughout all her Liturgy ; and on this ground she takes her leave of him, in the last act of kindness she can pay him in this world, when she gives "hearty thanks" to God, "for that it hath pleased" him "to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world."

The above statement is the argument of the present volume. It is the mode of blessing mankind revealed in the Bible—salvation by PROMISE: and it is the mode ESTABLISHED by the Legislature of the land, consistently with the Bible, of making every subject a blessing to himself, his neighbour, his country, and an honour to his God. Let the education of our children be conducted on this principle, as it is carried into practice by our Church in her Baptismal Service, and its two kindred formulæries, the Catechism and Confirmation Service. We may then hope that as faith pleads and acts on the PROMISE, God will bless his own mode of ameliorating the human character, and that our population shall not be a community of mere natural men, but a Communion of the Saints of God.

May the blessing of God smile on this weak effort to glorify his grace, and may every Reader say, Amen.



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ERRATA:

- Page 32, l. 3, for *he* r. *they*, and *his*, *their*.
64, l. 2, for *enflame*, r. *inflame*.
107, l. 17, for *sacrifice*, r. *sacrifice*.
165, l. 11, for *sovereign*, r. *sovereign*.
246, l. 7, for *he* r. *be*.
252, l. 10, for *provison*, r. *provision*.
273, l. 3, note, for *diocess*, r. *diocese*.
334, l. 14, { *for* *enfeofed*, r. *enfeoffed*.
443, l. 19, { *for* *enfeofs*, r. *enfeoffs*.
431, l. 11, for *preeceeding*, r. *preceding*.
468, l. 1, for *heighth*, r. *height*.

LETTER I.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS ON THE PRESENT RELAXED OBSERVANCE OF BAPTISMAL DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You asked me some time since, for a statement of my sentiments, on the subject of Infant-baptism, as administered by our Church; and on putting into your hands a paper which I had drawn up on that subject, you returned it to me, with a wish to 'see it in print, in a more enlarged form.'

Urged by your request, and encouraged by your judgment, I cheerfully cast my mite into the treasury of those benevolent exertions which are intended to compose our differences, and to bring us to that Communion of saints, in which I conceive it is the great object of our

Church in all her formularies to unite her children.

It is but too evident then, that men may “ profess and call themselves Christians,” without being effectually “ led into the way of truth.” They may therefore be formally admitted into the membership of the Holy Catholic Church ; but they may still have no fellowship with the saints in spirit, having no spiritual communion with Christ, the vital Head of his spiritual body. Since it is from Him that that genuine spirituality proceeds which combines every real member of this Communion in one holy society, and unites and incorporates both Him “ that sanctifieth” and them that “ are sanctified all ” in “ one.”¹ “ The mystical union between Christ and his Church,” says Bishop Pearson, “ the spiritual conjunction of the members to the Head, is the true foundation of that communion which one member hath with another, all the members living and increasing by the same influence which they receive from Him.”² Without a previous communion with Christ then, there can be no real spiritual communion with each other.

Hence it is but too clear that admission into the Holy Catholic Church by any external rite, and a partaking of the Communion of the saints, differ as truly as a mere profession does

¹ Heb. ii. 11.

² On the Creed, Article ix. p. 357.

from a sincere and indisputable reality. The one bears the name, the other possesses the Spirit of Christ : the one enters the door, but proceeds no further ; the other ranges through all the delightful apartments of the mansion, and enjoys all the privileges of a child of the family. “ There were not hypocrites among the Jews alone, but in the Church of Christ many cry “ Lord, Lord,” whom he knoweth not. The tares have the privilege of the field, as well as the wheat ; and the bad fish of the net, as well as the good. The saints have communion with hypocrites in all things with which the distinction of a saint and hypocrite can consist. They communicate in the same water, both externally baptised alike ; they communicate in the same creed, both make the same open profession of faith, both agree in the acknowledgment of the same principles of religion ; they communicate in the same word, both hear the same doctrine preached ; they communicate at the same table, both eat the same bread and drink the wine, which Christ hath appointed to be received ; but the hypocrite doth not communicate with the saint in the same saving grace, in the same true faith working by love, and in the same renovation of mind and spirit : for then he were not a hypocrite, but a saint. A saint doth not communicate with the hypocrite, in the same sins, in the same lurking infidelity, in the same un-

fruitfulness under the means of grace, in the same false pretence and empty form of godliness ; for then he were not a saint, but a hypocrite. Thus the saints may communicate with the wicked, so they communicate not with their wickedness ; and may have fellowship with sinners, so they have no fellowship with that which makes them such, that is, their sins.”¹ And by parity of reasoning, hypocrites, i. e. mere formal professors may openly and apparently communicate with the saints, but they can have no fellowship with their holiness, no communion with their graces. The Pharisee and the Publican may both go up to the same temple, but the pride of the one can have no communion with the humility of the other : nor can characters so dissimilar hold the same Head, derive grace from the same source, or be influenced by the same Spirit.

As Bishop Pearson’s name is deservedly venerable, and his work on the Creed is considered as a standard book, I appeal again to his authority, on this question. The following is the third reason he gives for believing the Church of Christ to be holy. “ It is necessary to believe the Church of Christ to be holy, lest we should presume to obtain any happiness *by being of it*, without that holiness which is required *in it*. It is enough that the end, institution, and ad-

¹ Id. Article ix. p. 356.

ministration of the Church are holy ; but that there may be some real and permanent advantage received by it, it is necessary that the *persons abiding in the communion of it should be really and effectually sanctified*. Without which holiness, the privileges of the Church prove the greatest disadvantages ; and the means of salvation neglected, tend to a punishment with aggravation. It is not only vain but pernicious to attend at the marriage feast, without a wedding garment ; and it is our Saviour's description of folly, to cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us," while we are without oil in our lamps. We must acknowledge a necessity of holiness, when we confess that Church alone which is holy can make us happy." ¹

Here, according to the Bishop, it is presumption to think of obtaining any happiness by being *of* the Church, without obtaining that holiness which is required *in* it. "The persons abiding in the communion of it should be really and effectually sanctified." Nay he goes so far as to say, that profession without reality will prove the greatest disadvantage, and be productive of aggravated punishment. The assertion then, that "admission into the Holy Catholic Church, by the external rite of Baptism, is that internal regeneration of the heart which evi-

¹ Art. ix. 350.

dences our union with the Communion of saints," only needs a plain statement of terms to prove its fallacy. External admission into the Holy Catholic Church by the rite of water-baptism, is but part of the Sacrament, "the outward visible sign:" it is the Baptism of the Spirit, "the inward and spiritual grace" of which the water is the emblem, the means, and the pledge that constitutes that holiness, which evidences our title to the Communion of the saints, and makes the Sacrament complete.

But is it not to be expected that this very mistake should have arisen in the Church? So long as the mere natural man may be the subject of the outward dispensation, he must be expected to confound external things with things spiritual. "The natural man," however distinguished by talents or acquirements, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God."¹ He cannot rise above his level; which is to look "at the outward appearance:" he is a creature of sense and sight and reason, and can comprehend the things which are obvious to those faculties; but not having the super-added faculty of faith, he cannot comprehend the things of the Spirit, which faith alone can discern. Hence he necessarily confounds the outward act with the inward grace—the sign with the thing sig-

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

nified—the water with the Spirit—the professing Holy Catholic Church, with the spiritual Communion of the saints ; and thus confounding circumstantial with essentials, all the mischiefs of delusion follow ; and the Christian body, thus feeding on wind instead of wholesome nutriment, is starved, and faints, and decays.

That this is not a speculative mischief merely, is but too evident from the relaxed estimation of this privilege of Baptism, throughout the professing Christian world. Is it not much to be feared, that, in most cases, none of the parties engaged in the rite, seem to expect any spiritual advantages to flow from it ? Are they not commonly content with the mere observance ? Are they not satisfied that the ceremony should have been performed, without caring for the privileges which the promise imparts to the baptised ? Do not Parents usually compliment away all hope of spiritual benefit to the baptised, in selecting for Sponsors, those who are related to them in nature, by the ties of friendship, or those from whose rank or wealth they encourage expectations of temporal aggrandisement for their children ? Are not Sponsors usually quite reckless of the spiritual character of “ the young Christian ? ” Is not the Child, as he increases in years and knowledge, educated in complete indifference to his Baptismal privileges and obligations ? and does the Church feel any interest in the baptised, as belonging to the

Communion of the saints ? Are any of these parties anxious to secure to the Child the most glorious and important privileges of being “a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven,” by training him up in a constant sense of his obligations to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, effectually to “believe the articles of the Christian faith,” and to “keep God’s holy will and commandments ;” and heartily to thank his Heavenly Father, that he hath called him to so blessed a state of salvation, and that it should be the object of his fervent prayers that he may have grace to walk in the same all the days of his life ? Alas ! My Dear Friend, how many of us have either been the victims of this delusion of mistaking the sign for the thing signified, in our education from childhood ; or have contributed to the confirmation of the same, by undertaking the office of Sponsors for others, to whom we have paid no attention after the ceremony of Baptism had been performed.

I confess that this prevailing error, in the very outset of our professing Christian course, appears to me to be the fruitful source of both the loose profession, and the fickle attachment to our Established Church, which has been so much and so feelingly lamented. If Baptism be no more than a sign, a sign is no more than a form, and a form is easily satisfied by a mere profession : and if it admit us into nothing more

than the name of the Church, without uniting us to the privileges, and sympathies, and spiritual fellowship which form the essential realities of the Communion of saints, how can we hope for attachment to that which is merely nominal, and with which no perception of spiritual blessings is connected. Viewed as Baptism usually is, how can profession be otherwise than loose, and attachment otherwise than fickle. Solid attachment to an object arises from a sense of its loveliness, its excellence, or from our experience of the blessings we derive from it : but where these are not perceived or felt, attachment cannot be otherwise than fickle ; it rests on no solid basis, and is the sport of every error that may assail it.

And is not this fundamental error the mighty mischief which is now desolating our Church ? all the evils that have ever been ascribed to the doctrines of grace, with all their perversions, and all their misapprehensions, must sink into insignificance, when compared with those which daily and palpably issue from the assertion of “the general efficacy of Baptism in all who partake of the rite.” The former evils are generally apparent, not so much in practice, as on the pages of speculative and accusing controversialists ; while the latter force themselves on our notice in the experience of every day ; for were a due regard paid to Baptismal privileges, and Baptismal duties, by all those who have

solemnly engaged to improve the one, and to discharge the other ; and were our lives, as they should be, practically employed in accomplishing our Baptismal vows ; i. e. were our Baptism not merely a profession but a reality ; is it possible that we could see so much pride, vanity, ambition, covetousness, and worldly-mindedness—so much mere morality, and so much awful presumption as we witness in the professing world ? It could not surely be. Confidence in the *sign* is consistent enough with mere profession, and profession may consist with an accommodating similarity to the character of the professors around us : but vital possession of the *thing signified*, the blessed influence of the Holy Spirit, without which it is no Sacrament to the recipient, must purify the heart, renew the life, and thoroughly furnish the man of God “unto all good works.”¹ In the one case there is the genuine answer of a good conscience toward God,” a conscientious recognition of Baptismal obligations, and a corresponding holy conversation ; in the other there is nothing more than “the putting away of the” outward “filth of the flesh ;”² an ablution which, unless joined with the influence of the Spirit, can never affect the soul. And as Bishop Jewell asserts, “Verily to ascribe felicity or remission of sin, which is the inward work of the

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 17.

² 1 Pet. iii. 21.

Holy Ghost, unto any manner outward action whatsoever, it is a superstitious, a gross, and a Jewish error.”¹

But if the Sacrament of Baptism is thus rendered vain and effete by mistaking the sign for the thing signified,—the water for the Spirit; is this all the injury which it has received? Has it not to complain also of the unworthy treatment it has experienced in the house of its friends?

Blessed be God there are those who know and feel that Baptism is not “an outward and visible sign only, but “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace,” and yet their estimate of the privileges and efficacy of Baptism is low and inoperative: they rather consider it as an introduction into a professing Church, than as accompanied with any real spiritual blessings to the baptised, as admitted into the Communion of the saints. Their faith in the promise issues in no corresponding practice in the education of the Child. They cannot so much be said to “doubt” as to forget that God has received the infant, that he has regenerated him with his Holy Spirit, that he has received him for his own child by adoption, and incorporated him into his holy Church; and that they have given God “hearty thanks” for the same. They do not consider the Child as,

¹ Jewell’s Reply, &c. p. 442.

thus "regenerated," "adopted," and "incorporated," and therefore they do not plead the promise for a blessing on their education of him as devoted to God, or call upon him, as one invested with so high privileges as "a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven," to walk worthy of his high calling. The promise affords them no aid in bringing up the Child as a child of God, and the privileges conferred are not urged as a ground of encouragement to induce to the pursuit of holiness, the attainment of one grace, or the regulation of one temper. The rich expressions of privileges actually conferred in Baptism, which occur in the Baptismal and Confirmation Services, and in the Catechism, have no influence on their practice. Neither Baptismal blessings, nor Baptismal vows are distinctly presented to the mind of the Child, and his Baptism has no practical purpose. Even these pious Parents make no demand on the spiritual superintendence of the Sponsors of the Child;—even pious Sponsors acknowledge no obligation of this spiritual superintendence;—the Child grows up without any consciousness of his Baptismal enjoyments or privileges;—and the Church, not merely the professing, but the spiritual Church entertains neither hopes nor fears on account of the Child, and consequently exercises no faith in the promise, and presents no prayers for its accomplishment towards him. And thus, even

among the pious, Baptism is little more than a dead letter, promises without plea for their fulfilment—vows without concern to discharge them—a ceremony acquitting them from subsequent interest—a sign signifying nothing.

We have had of late many interesting treatises on education, most of which have lamented the defective instruction of our times ; but as it appears to me, the best treatise on education is to be found in the best principles and order for its practice. The Church of England has made the largest and most efficient provision for the holy education of its children : and no treatises ever yet published on this most interesting subject appear to me to approach in excellence within any comparable distance, to that of the Baptismal and Confirmation Services, and the Catechism of our Church. Here are the best *rules*, even those proposed by the scriptures of truth—here are the best *means*, the application of the promises of a gracious God, the prayers of the sympathizing Church, spiritual instruction in graces and duties, and privileges unquestionably holy ; and the confirming efficacy of the Holy Spirit—here is the best *issue*, certainty of success, dependent on our faith in the promise of a faithful God. Were we but consistent Churchmen, did we but adhere to this system of education laid down by our Church, beginning with the simple devotion of the Child to God, and training him up in the way that he should go with a just con-

fidence on the divine promise for success in our endeavours, we might then sow in hope that the holy principles of his childhood would, with growing years, be formed into holy habits, and that when he was old he would not depart from them.

And to what, indeed, My Dear Friend, may we ascribe the infidelity, the scepticism, the Socinianism, the spiritual indifference, the lukewarm profession, the fashionable formality, and the too visible ignorance of the blessed principles on which our Church is built; and above all, the confused notions of Baptism which so generally prevail, but to this departure from the simple mode proposed by our Church for the education of her children. It would be acting against the plainest principles of our nature, to educate our youth as we do at present, and to expect from such education a Christian practice. In what mode does Christianity as a practical system enter into our plan of instruction? Is it not notorious that mythology has assumed the place of Christianity, and that the education of the young is more mythological than Christian? The respective systems by no means divide the attention of our youth, or exercise an equal influence in training their minds, or in forming their principles. On the Sabbath indeed they are taught to read Christian scriptures, to attend a Christian place of worship, and to bow down to the Christian God as the true God; but on

the other six days of the week how little is done to temper by Christian instruction the impure, and corrupt elegancies of heathen learning, or even to neutralize the polluting effect of the lascivious examples of heathen deities—the false, obscene, excessive, and defiling sentiments and descriptions of heathen poets and historians—or the erroneous policy, the glaringly false morality, and the unmeasured profligacy of heathen philosophers and statesmen. The unqualified instruction of six days must be expected to influence the mind more than the customary attentions paid to Christian institutions and Christian instruction on the seventh ; especially where Christianity is not so much taught in its spiritual influence and vital loveliness, as in the way of a task, of a dry lesson of ethics, or a system of theological orthodoxy. To expect Christian conduct from an education principally, nay in practice, almost exclusively heathen, is surely highly unphilosophical and unreasonable ; it is in fact to expect impossibilities, to seek for “grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles.”¹

I know it will be said, that at our schools and colleges Christianity is largely taught, that its evidences are insisted on, that prayers are regularly said, chapel and church attended, the Sabbath exempted from the ordinary occupations which would desecrate it, and the Bible held

¹ Matt. vii. 16.

out as the alone volume of inspiration ; that it has a decided preference assigned to it above all human productions ; and that thus Christian impressions become habitual and customary. I grant, indeed, that these things produce an effect in impressing the youthful mind with the value of Christianity as an external dispensation, and that they ensure respect to our Established Church ; but is the effect of all this teaching so powerful as the teaching of heathenism ? Are not the principles enforced really heathen ; the love of human glory, the cultivation of talent as the means of gratifying ambition, and acquiring distinction among men ? and are not the virtues of heathens more practically recommended to the attention of the young than the graces of Jesus Christ and those spiritual perfections which constitute holiness ? Indeed, it has long appeared to me that one fact is decisive of this question, the neglect of Hebrew literature in our general education : had the great truths of Revelation been the subject of general instruction, the language of that Revelation had been more generally cultivated : whereas it is notorious that not only in our ordinary education it finds no place, but that in many of our Public Schools the cultivation of Hebrew literature is altogether excluded from the system.¹

¹ It is worth while to observe the attention paid to Scripture instruction, by the importance assigned to Hebrew literature in

But indeed, My Dear Friend, will not the plain truth of the case justify us in further remarking, that the plan of education laid down by our Church in the three formularies already specified, is only regarded by us as calculated to occupy the attention of our childish years while yet under maternal tuition ; or that it may do well enough for the instruction of our Charity Schools and the children of the poor : and when we enter upon Greek and Latin authors, is not this very entrance into heathen literature the usual signal for laying aside the early instructions of our former years ? or at least of admitting them to so secondary a place in our education, (if indeed it can be called secondary,) that from mere desuetude they are treated with indifference and neglect. And thus these admirable formularies become little more than a dead letter, a rule without practice, a system without observance, a privilege without enjoyment. And can it be the subject of wonder to a reflecting mind, that

the education given by our Public Schools as they were established at the Reformation, or before or after that period. At Winchester and Eton founded before the Reformation, and at the Charter House, founded since, when the purity of the principles of the Reformation had declined, Hebrew is not taught ; while at St. Paul's, Westminster, and Merchant Taylor's, founded during Reforming times, the Hebrew language still continues to be taught. The opportunity of early instruction in the rudiments of knowledge, once lost, is seldom regained amidst the occupations of after life ; a remark which many of us can confirm by painful experience.

a course of education, Christian in name and heathen in effect, should produce its proper fruits ; that a defective principle should issue in a defective practice, and that among all ranks of our people, and all the great moral executive of the country—the Cabinet, the Legislature, the Bar, the Magistracy, and the Pulpit—and in that perhaps chief organ of moral influence, the domestic circle, where first principles are usually formed into practice—the neglect of a sound pious education, provided by our truly Christian Church, should be visited by the state of society we behold ; decency substituted for piety, form for substance, ordinances for devotion, and where the rottenness of heathen corruption seeks in vain for concealment under the nail-deep film of a Christian profession and a Christian name.

From this self-inflicted state of moral debasement to raise our still blessed country by the application of that system of education provided by a Church which she still upholds and venerates, is the design of the following hints. I profess myself hopeless of the revival of sound Christianity in our Church, but by a recurrence to the primitive principle on which she is founded, salvation by grace through faith in the Redeemer. This, I apprehend, to be the great prevailing principle of our Baptismal service, and its kindred formularies. It is the free promise of mercy to the children of believing Parents,

which at once encourages the Parent to present his Infant for incorporation into the Communion of the saints—the Child to holy effort, and holy perseverance in his Christian course—the Sponsors to undertake and to persist in their tutelary work with any hope of success—and the Church to extend her interest to every such incorporated little one, as a nascent believer, growing up under her prayers and affectionate communion, a sound member of that body of which Christ is the Head, and thus privileged to be a child of God, and an heir of glory.

LETTER II.

THE PARENTS.

If we ask then, how are the benefits of Infant baptism to be secured, so as to answer the ends of a holy education ? we answer, from faith in the general promises made to believing Parents in behalf of their Children, and particularly in the promise made at the celebration of this Sacrament to all who partake of it in faith. And these relate to the PARENTS—the SPONSORS—the INFANT baptised—and the CHURCH.

It is surely no small consolation to Christian Parents and to those who belong to the communion of our Church, in common with others who have entered into the married state, “ reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God,” “ that they may see their Children christianly and virtuously brought up ” to the “ praise and honour ” of God. According to the doctrine of our Church, founded on the word of God, the loveliest Child living is “ by nature born in sin, and the Child of wrath,” “ forasmuch as all men are conceived and born in sin, and none

can enter into the kingdom of God except he be regenerate and born anew of water and the Holy Ghost." It must therefore be the leading desire of these Parents' hearts that their Children should be partakers of covenant mercies, and should be interested in all the blessings connected with that name, than which there is none other given "under heaven whereby we must be saved."¹ And as Baptism has ever been considered by the Church of Christ as that initiating Sacrament, by which the Child receives the solemn investiture of his privileges as a believer in Christ; and as it is eminently so considered by that portion of the Church to which they belong; while they will hope for no blessing upon their Child but as faith draws it from the promise of a gracious God, so they will be desirous that every blessing of the promise should be sealed to him by that Sacrament which is its sign and pledge.

It might be expected, that, as our Church takes for granted, that all the Infants of her members will be presented for the sign and seal of their Church-membership, in the initiatory Sacrament of Baptism, any formal mention of the grounds of Infant-baptism might be spared, and that nothing more was necessary than to insist on the privileges and duties of this Sacra-

¹ Acts iv. 12.

ment, and to encourage all within the pale of the Church to enjoy the one and to discharge the other. Our Church assumes that all who are engaged in the ordinance, are "persuaded of the good-will of our heavenly Father towards this Infant, declared by his Son Jesus Christ: and" are "nothing doubting but that he favourably alloweth this charitable work of ours, in bringing this Infant to his holy Baptism." It assumes, therefore, that all such are convinced of the excellence of the rite, and of the propriety of its institution. And to such all further mention of the grounds of Infant-baptism might seem superfluous. But so low is the general estimate of Baptism among us, that it is to be feared, that few have taken pains to inform themselves of the grounds on which the Baptism of Infants rests. The introduction, therefore, of the more obvious reasons for the administration of Baptism to Infants seems indispensable.

I say "the more obvious reasons," for it would be quite inconsistent with the plan of this letter, as well as unjust to the subject itself, to attempt any thing like a complete statement of all the grounds that may be adduced in favour of Infant-baptism, within the short compass proposed. What I shall offer, by the blessing of God, are such as are conclusive in deciding my own mind on the subject; and if they should appear to be insufficient to any who may favor

them with a perusal, I must refer such to the authors who have written professedly on the question.

I am aware that the acceptance which this subject will find, will vary with the quarter from which it is presented. If it come from the regions of controversy, and address itself dryly to the mind, apart from those circumstances in which fallen man is found as a rebel to his God, desirous of reconciliation to his favour, and anxious for every mark and pledge which may assure to him and his, the possession of that favor; it will meet with a cold reception probably, and produce no greater effect than the attempts which have preceded it. From those regions of controversy, therefore, where mere mind reigns devoid of feeling, and intolerant prejudice banishes the kindlier dispositions of the heart, I make no approach. Religion is only really acceptable to a mind rightly disposed, or what the Scripture calls an "understanding heart." We do not so much need the logical acuteness of the head to comprehend ideas, as the kindly disposition of the heart to approve and to embrace them. With all the advantages ever yet ascribed to it, I am one, who have long thought that controversy has done more harm to the Church than it has ever done good.¹ Truth

¹ If the proverbial allusion to express the bitterness of human hatred, is not—the hatred of philosophers, or the hatred of poli-

spoken in opposition, and therefore too often under irritation, prejudice, or party-feeling, was never yet a just exhibition of the Gospel ; it was counteracting in spirit what it was asserting in the letter. I utterly renounce, therefore, all approach to controversy, and take my stand in that station of domestic life, where the kindlier affections have their freest exercise—where, in the bosom of a Christian family, the religion of Jesus presents its fairest exhibition, and where it both originates and matures the sweetest character of grace.

That we may view the subject then in its due bearing, let us place ourselves in the family of two Christian Parents, whose conjugal affection has been blessed with a living Child. It is not only received as the pledge of their affection to each other, but of God's love to them. They

ticians, or of rivals, or even that of those whose trade is war,—but *odium theologicum*, the hatred of divines ; it is surely time for the honour of our common Christianity, that theological discussion should exhibit the essence of that choicest gift of God, the name of which it bears. That man knows but little of himself, who, even in his honest ardour to establish truth, does not feel “the abundance of his own sense” of a subject ever inclining him to intolerance of every differing sentiment. I would avail myself of this opportunity of requesting my reader to pardon what he may deem excessive in the course of this work ; and to attribute it rather to the infirmities of a nature over-sanguine in effecting its object, than to any intention of trenching upon the sentiments of another, by the undue enforcement of my own.

receive it in faith ; believing his word, that "children are an heritage of the Lord, and " that "the fruit of the womb is his reward ;" that "happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them ;" and that the blessings of a religious household, so beautifully described by David, are among the richest gifts, both in providence and grace, that the bounty of our heavenly Father can bestow. His wife seated in the chair of domestic respect, "as a fruitful vine by the sides of" his "house ;" his "children, like olive-plants, round about the" same "table," orderly, affectionate, and taught to love God—surely such a scene whether witnessed or anticipated, must impress the grateful husband who fears God with the conviction, that "thus blessed," he is blessed "out of Zion ;" that these blessings are his as he fears God ; and he trusts to "see the good of Jerusalem all the days of" his "life," even to "see his children's children, and peace upon Israel."¹ Thus connecting both his present and future happiness as well as that of his Child with the fear of God, he is most desirous of securing to him every spiritual blessing : and while it is his object to train him up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, as his truest happiness, it is also his object to assure himself, that God to whom he has devoted his Child, has a favourable

¹ Psalm cxxviii.

countenance towards him, and that his “labour” shall not be “in vain in the Lord.”¹

With this view he will reflect on the instances of kindness shown by God to Children. When Korah and his company were destroyed, “ notwithstanding the children of Korah died not.”² So of the Edomite and the Egyptian it is said, though excluded themselves, “the children that are begotten of them, shall enter into the congregation of the Lord in their third generation.”³ The jealousy of God extends no further than to the third or fourth generation of them that hate him, in visiting “the sins of the fathers upon the children;” but he shows mercy unto thousands of generations of those that love him, and keep his commandments.⁴ His jealousy towards the family of the wicked, knows a measure of punishment; his mercy towards the family of those that love him knows no measure of grace. And when God spared Nineveh, his consideration for the helpless Infants in “that great city,” formed a leading ground of his merciful forbearance, “wherein are more than six-score thousand persons, that cannot discern between their right hand and their left.”⁵

To the above, these Parents will add the cheering consideration that the Children of believers are “beloved for the fathers’ sakes;”

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 58. ² Numb. xxvi. 11. ³ Deut. xxiii. 8.

⁴ Exod. xx. 6. ⁵ Jonah iv. 11.

and that, as such, they have many exceeding great and precious promises, the rich expressions of God's favor to them especially. "The just man walketh in his integrity, his children are blessed after him."¹—The faithful God which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations."²—"The righteous—is ever merciful and lendeth ; and his seed is blessed."³—"For the Lord is good ; his mercy is everlasting ; and his truth endureth, to generation and generation."—margin⁴ "The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee."⁵—"The generation of the upright shall be blessed."⁶—"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children ; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them."⁷—"The seed of the righteous shall be delivered."⁸—"I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring : and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's ; and another

¹ Prov. xx. 7. ² Deut. vii. 9. ³ Psalm xxxvii. 25, 26.

⁴ Psalm c. 5. ⁵ Psalm cii. 28. ⁶ Psalm cxii. 2.

⁷ Psalm ciii. 17, 18. ⁸ Prov. xi. 21.

shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.”¹—The above is a full and comprehensive promise, which may cheer the heart of the most timid believing Parent. “But my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation, from generation to generation.”²—“They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.”³—“His mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.”⁴—I close this enumeration of promises by that large and ample expression of mercy uttered by St. Peter; “Repent, and be baptised every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off,” whether in time, or place, “even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”⁵

And all these promises seem to be confirmed by the following striking passage of St. Paul; “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.” To which

¹ Isa. xliv. 3—5. ² Isa. li. 8. ³ Isa. lxv. 23.

⁴ Luke i. 50.

⁵ Acts ii. 38, 39.

words I will only add Hooker's comment. "We are plainly taught of God, that the seed of Faithful Parentage is holy from the very birth."¹

Indeed God looks upon the Children of the Church as his own Children, as is evident from the following affecting expostulation of God with his people, during their captivity in Babylon. "Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them [idols] to be devoured. Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter, that thou hast slain *my* children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them?"²

Encouraged by these repeated promises of mercy and love to his Children, all of which the believing Parent will apply to himself and his Child by faith; he will find yet larger encouragement in that act of condescending love, when the Saviour confirmed these promises of mercy in his acceptance of the "Infants,"³ that were brought to him, and in bestowing his blessing upon them. Will these Parents form a false judgment of our Church's intention in selecting this one passage from the scripture, as the ground of Baptismal blessing, without mentioning one of the above promises;

¹ See Ec. Pol. B. v. c. 60. See also this text amply discussed by Wall. "Hist. of Infant Baptism," i. 123.

² Ezek. xvi. 20, 21.

³ Luke xviii. 15.

if they should infer, that she conceives the virtue of all the promises to the Children of believers, to be concentrated in this one act of our Lord, when he received Infants into his arms and blessed them? In this act is something beyond promise; it is not a promise given, but a promise acted out; not a word of mercy spoken, but an act of mercy accomplished. "Ye perceive," says the Church, "how by his outward gesture and deed he declared his good will toward them, for"—he did not give a promise; but he ratified every promise heretofore given to the Children of believers, by his authentic act and deed;—"he embraced them in his arms, he laid his hands upon them, and blessed them." On this accomplishment of promise she encourages the faith of the believer; "Wherefore we being *thus* persuaded of the good will of our heavenly Father towards this infant, declared by his son Jesus Christ, and nothing doubting," &c: and in the address to the Sponsors, shortly after, she adds, "ye have heard also that our Lord Jesus Christ hath promised in his Gospel, to grant all these things that ye have prayed for: which promise he for his part will most surely keep and perform." In the first sentence the congregation is reminded of "the good will of our heavenly Father" towards "infants," first the subject of promise, that promise afterwards practically "declared by his Son Jesus Christ," in his loving acceptance of them: and in the

second sentence the Sponsors are encouraged by the general promise "ask and ye shall have," to believe that our Lord Jesus Christ will "grant all these things that ye have prayed for." Here then are great and abundant promises, promises ratified by the practical kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the days of his flesh, full of encouragement and peace: and the benefit of these promises, these faithful Parents will apply to themselves and their offspring.

Nor will they stop here: they will on so important a question, as that of the favor of God towards their Child, not rest merely on the general assurance of the mercy of God towards him in the promise, they will ask further for some particular token, sign, seal and pledge of this mercy in a Sacrament especially appointed for this purpose. If the Child, according to the promise, be a gracious Child, as the offspring of the believer, he belongs to the family of grace; and there must surely be some visible mode appointed by God for his admission into that family, a mode by which the Church shall testify the reception of the Child into her bosom, and afford the Parents and Sponsors, and the Child himself, when he arrives at an age to comprehend his own privileges, a pledge to assure them that such Child does really belong to the family of Christ.

And on looking into the page of scripture, and observing the general practice of the Church

throughout all ages, from the early covenant of God with Abraham and all his faithful posterity, both Jew and Gentile, he will to his inexpressible satisfaction learn, that as God has given a promise of grace to believers and their Children after them, so he has uniformly afforded them the richest assurance of the blessing, by appointing a particular Sacrament for the initiatory ingrafting of such Children into his Church, as the means of actually conveying the blessing, and as a sign, and seal, and pledge to assure every believer of the same.¹

While these believing Parents contemplate their Child as born in sin, and therefore the Child of wrath, it must be their most anxious

¹ St. Stephen states this idea most concisely and impressively, and in a manner encouraging to every Christian Parent. " And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land ; and that they should bring them into bondage, and intreat them evil four hundred years. And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God : and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place." Here is the promise. Next we have the seal of it ; " and he gave him the covenant of circumcision." Thus assured, Abraham acted on this assurance—" and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day :" and the Patriarchs acted with the same faith : " and Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob begat the twelve Patriarchs." The Christian Parent and all his posterity have the same warrant. First the promise ; next the assurance and pledge of the promise " the covenant " of Baptism ; let him only act with the same faith, and all the blessings of the Covenant shall be to him and his Children.

inquiry, how can this Child stand before God without the imputation of sin, and be assured of restoration to his favour? And they will see, that God has done this, for the comfort of believers, by the Sacrament of Circumcision under the Law, and by the Sacrament of Baptism under the Gospel; and that while the seal of ratification has been altered from the blood of Circumcision to the more merciful water of Baptism, the blessing has equally been conferred by promise, and not by any mere act or observance of law, whether under the Law or under the Gospel.

And as Circumcision, as preparatory to Baptism, appears to be the hinge on which the question mainly turns, it seems to deserve our more particular attention. Let us consider it first then in its institution. "As for me, behold my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram; but thy name shall be Abraham, for a Father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee; and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan for an everlast-

ing possession ; and I will be their God." This is God's part of the covenant, and can it be said from these expressions, that "the old Fathers did look only for transitory promises?" The words seem to convey blessings of two characters. First temporal ; Abraham was to "be a father of many nations," he was to be "exceeding fruitful," "kings" should "come out of" him, and "Canaan" should be "an everlasting possession" to him and his "seed after" him. The covenant had, secondly, spiritual blessings : for Canaan was to be given to him and his seed "for an everlasting possession," intimating that eternal possession of which Canaan was but a type, concluding the promise with the blessed spiritual assurance, "and I will be their God." Jehovah assures him also in the preceding verse, "and I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant ; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." Did the Father of the faithful annex no other meaning to these expressions, "to be a God unto thee,¹ and to thy

¹ For God to be our God is the highest privilege he can bestow upon us. It is to impart himself to us, with all his communicable excellencies.—"And in his blood shed upon the cross (says Bradford addressing his God) thou hast made a covenant with me, which thou wilt never forget, that thou art, and wilt be my Lord and my God : that is, thou wilt forgive me my sins, and be wholly mine, with all thy power, wisdom, righteousness, truth, glory, and mercy."

seed after thee," in "Canaan an everlasting possession," than that God should be to him a God in providence, in a land flowing with the milk and honey of temporal prosperity? or in this covenant did he see the day of Christ; and recognize God as a God of mercy and grace, pronouncing spiritual blessings on himself and his posterity? If he saw nothing more than temporal blessings in this covenant, his faith had surely but a comparatively poor subject for its confidence; but if he accepted God as his God, and as the God of his seed after him, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, dispensing spiritual blessings to himself and his offspring; here was a subject of promise worthy of the utmost confidence of the Father of the faithful, in which he recognized himself as the distinguished channel of the primeval blessing of the Messiah, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. And this was surely the object of his faith.

Then follows man's part of the covenant: "and God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee, in their generations. This is my covenant which ye shall keep, between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among

you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed,"¹ &c. In the painful act of Circumcision, the faithful Jew doubtless recognised the excision of a fleshly nature ; and as his faith discerned the spiritual nature of the rite, so did he really enjoy the blessing. But we cannot suppose that any spiritual advantage was conveyed by the rite, any further than that advantage was applied by faith ; even as at present, Baptismal washing is not the blessing, but the thing signified, the heavenly cleansing by the blood and Spirit of Christ, which living faith extracts from the application of the sign.

It is clear from a variety of passages in scripture, that Circumcision had more than a national distinction, it had a spiritual distinction also. "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart."² "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."³ "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem."⁴ "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will punish all them that are circumcised with the uncircumcised, &c. for all these nations are uncir-

¹ Gen. xvii.

² Deut. x. 16.

³ Deut. xxx. 6.

⁴ Jer. iv. 4.

cumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart : ”¹ and the Apostle decides the point beyond all question : “ For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly ; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh : but he is a Jew which is one inwardly ; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter ; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”²

Here then it is clear, First, that Circumcision was a spiritual rite, and conveyed spiritual blessings ; secondly, that the Child circumcised the eighth day was capable of spiritual blessings ; thirdly, that the Child thus circumcised was considered, and by this Sacrament admitted, a member of the Church ; and it seems to me to be equally clear, that the spiritual blessing was conferred on the Child, not as it was a Jew, “one outwardly,” but as those who brought the Child and the Church acted faith on the promise, and as the circumcised Child exercised faith in the same promise, in after life, and showed that his “circumcision” was “that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter ;” practically applying the promise to his own individual advantage, by believing that the God of faithful Abraham was his God also, as the faithful seed of Abraham, and evidencing that faith by a corresponding holiness of life.

¹ Jer. ix. 25, 26.

² Rom. ii. 28, 29.

We may further remark, that the Gospel is the subject of all the Sacraments, whether under the Legal dispensation, or that of the Gospel. The blessings of Circumcision were by promise ; the blessings of the Passover were by promise also : so under the Gospel dispensation the blessings of the Sacraments, both of Baptism and of the Lord's Supper, are by promise. What then is the great and uniform blessing of promise ? The forgiveness of sin, free, full, and sovereign, not on account of works, but simply from mercy and grace. Let us attend then to the Apostle's statement of this subject, and apply his reasoning. He thus states the Gospel and its blessings as connected with Circumcision : “ Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”¹ This is a compendium of the Gospel : the non-imputation of sin to the sinner, or the removal of the charge of sin from his person, and in this his gratuitous pardon, is the sum of redemption ; as the Apostle declares, “ In whom we have redemption through his blood,—the forgiveness of sins.”² In either case this blessing is a free gift, whether bestowed on the Jew or the Gentile, of which the Sacrament is the means and pledge ; and faith is the recipient, as in the instance of Abraham, whose faith in the promise was counted to him for righteousness, of which promise Circumcision was *afterwards* given as

¹ Rom. iv. 8.

² Eph. i. 7.

the seal, that he might be equally the Father of believers, whether circumcised or uncircumcised. “Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised.” Circumcision was not the blessing, that was the non-imputation of sin; it was only the sign of that blessing, which was signified by it; neither did the mere observance of the rite of Circumcision benefit Abraham or his Children without faith, for it was only the seal of the righteousness of that faith which he had before his Circumcision: and thus Abraham is “the Father” of all “them that believe” in all times of the Church, “that righteousness might be imputed to them also.” Whether under the Law then, or under the Gospel, the blessing is given by promise, to which the Sacrament was superadded, as the means, and pledge, and sign, and seal. The real blessing was under both appropriated by faith: it was the faith of Abraham the Father of the Church which conveyed the spiritual blessing to his circumcised offspring; and it is the faith of the Church ever since that has conveyed the blessing to her Children, whether

under the Sacrament of Circumcision, or of its succeeding counterpart, Baptism. The Church is still the family of faithful Abraham, her Children are still the children of the promise made to him, and the seal of the promise varies with the character of the dispensation under which they are placed.

And this conclusion appears to be just, not only from the reason of the thing, as above, but from the express terms of the Apostle in the epistle to the Colossians. “ In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ—buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” What is the plain sense of the passage ? The Colossians were “ circumcised with the circumcision made without hands,” which Circumcision consisted “ in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the Circumcision of Christ,” which Circumcision of Christ, or Christian Circumcision, consisted in being “ buried with him in baptism,” in which baptism ye are not only buried, but “ wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith,” &c. Let the whole passage be read, not as divided into verses, but as one connected sentence, introducing a hyphen between “ Christ ” and “ buried,” as above, and all difficulty seems to be removed as to its sense ;

then “the circumcision of Christ” is the being “buried with him in baptism, &c.” in other words what Circumcision was under the Law, Baptism is under the Gospel of Christ. This appears to be the most natural construction of the passage; it is that which is given to it by names of no mean note; the Belgic confession expressly stating, “For the which cause Paul calleth Baptism the circumcision of Christ.” And if Baptism be admitted to be under the Gospel what Circumcision was under the Law, (and it is apparent, as above, that Circumcision conveyed spiritual blessings,) it is clear that if Infants were capable of spiritual blessings by being partakers of the one Sacrament, they are equally capable of the same blessings by being made partakers of the other.

It is not a little remarkable that the early Fathers of the Church to the time of Augustine, consider Baptism as given to us in the place of Circumcision; as Origen, Cyprian, Gregory Nazianzen, Ambrose, &c.; and that three of them, Basil, Augustine, and Chrysostom, give to the above passage in the epistle to the Colossians, the same sense as that ascribed to it above.¹ The same sentiment prevailed at the Reformation; and it cannot reasonably be doubted, that

¹ See Wall’s “Defence of the History of Infant-baptism,” vol. iii. pp. 269—272. The discussion on the above text which these pages contain will amply reward a patient perusal of them.

it has been at all times both anterior and subsequent to that period, the generally received sentiment of the Church, that what Circumcision was to the faithful Jew under the Law, Baptism is at least to the faithful Christian under the Gospel. The covenant blessings of the Father of the faithful are sure to all his faithful seed; and as they are sealed by the blood of Circumcision under the first dispensation, they are sealed by the milder seal of the water of Baptism under the second. The Church is equally “Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”¹

To the above considerations, let it be added, that Baptism by water was a practice to which the Jew had long been accustomed before the coming of Christ, and to which he seems to have been especially familiarized during the ministry of our Lord, by the introductory Baptism of him who was the last messenger of the Law, and the preparatory harbinger of the Gospel, expressly sent, as the messenger of the Saviour, to prepare his way before him.

That the Jews had long been accustomed to this practice is affirmed by Wall, from sufficient authority. “It is evident,” says he, “that the custom of the Jews before our Saviour’s time, (and as they themselves affirm, from the beginning of their law,) was to baptise as well as circumcise any proselyte that came over to

¹ Gal. iii. 29.

them from the nations. This does fully appear both from the books of the Jews themselves, and also of others that understood the Jewish customs, and have written of them. They reckoned all mankind besides themselves to be in an unclean state, and not capable of being entered into the covenant of Israelites without a *Washing* or *Baptism*, to denote their purification from their uncleanness. And this was called the baptising of them unto Moses.” “This custom of the Jews continued after Christ’s time, and after their expulsion from the Holy Land ; and continues (as I shewed from Leo Modena,) to this day, if there be any that now a-days do turn proselytes to their religion. Wherever they sojourned, if they found any of that country that chose to be of their religion, they would not admit him, unless he would first be washed or baptised by them.”¹ Thus the idea of Baptism as typical of the spiritual washing of the soul, was an idea to which the Jew had long been accustomed.

The Jews were also familiarized to Baptism by the preparatory Baptism of John, which was just that intermediate dispensation that formed an easy transition from the Law to the Gospel.

¹ See Wall’s “History of Infant-Baptism,” introduction, pp. 68, 72. It does not consist with the proposed brevity of the above statement to quote the authorities given by Wall : they are well worth consulting by those who entertain any doubt of the fact.

He baptised with water to repentance, which as it does not appear to have superseded the Circumcision of the Law on one hand, neither did it convey the full spiritual blessings of the Gospel on the other. We do not find that Infants were admitted to the Baptism of John, so that Circumcision, so far as appears, took place as usual, during his Baptismal ministry; while on the other hand those, who were "baptised unto John's baptism," might "not so much as hear whether there be any Holy Ghost,"¹ and must be referred to Christ for those full spiritual blessings which he alone could communicate, who was to "baptise" them "with the Holy Ghost and with fire."² Thus John's Baptism was an intermediate dispensation between Circumcision and Baptism, preparing the way for the substitution of the latter for the former.

With the advantage of these considerations, let us conceive a faithful Jew to be the hearer of St. Peter's first sermon preached on the day of Pentecost, when the Gospel was completed, and when "they that gladly received his word were baptised."³ Baptised himself, what is he to do with his Child? this Child has arrived at its eighth day; by the spirit of the new dispensation, Circumcision is done away, and is there no Sacrament under the Gospel which seals covenant blessings to his Child as Circumcision

¹ Acts xix. 2, 3.

² Matt. iii. 11.

³ Acts ii. 41.

did under the Law? At the institution of Circumcision, God had promised to be "a God" to Abraham, and "to his seed after" him—that blessing was a spiritual blessing, extending, under the outward emblem "circumcision," to that of "the foreskin of the heart"—the promise was "sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham,"¹—he hears of a "circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ," which is the "being buried with him in baptism :" Christ has instituted a new Sacrament of Baptism, and has enjoined his disciples, to go and teach all nations, and baptise them; if all nations had been proselyted to Judaism, they must have been baptised at least; he is accustomed to this Baptism by the ordinary mode of receiving proselytes, he is still more familiarized with it, having been a partaker of John's Baptism; shall not his faith then apply the new Sacrament of Baptism to his Child in the place of Circumcision, and thus the Child be outwardly acknowledged by the Church as an heir of grace, as well as virtually be such by the covenant of promise? In Circumcision his Child would have received his covenant name, as the Jewish Child did;² at Baptism he receives the same—in the former the Child receives the seal

¹ Rom. iv. 16.

² Luke i. 59. and ii. 21.

of the promise ; in the latter it receives the same,—in the former it is accepted into Church-membership ; in the latter it finds the same acceptance,—in the former the faith of the Church has enrolled the Child in the number of the faithful ; in the latter the same faith has admitted the Child to the same blessed privilege,—in the former he is educated on the promise as a Child of faithful Abraham ; in the latter he is educated in faith of the same promise, and of additional and confirmatory promises, as “a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.”

And if Baptism be not the successor of Circumcision, what is the designation of his Child ? he is not a Jew, he is not a Gentile, he is not a Christian ; he is nothing. “ outwardly ; ” he nominally belongs to no Church, no “ household of God ; ” for without the pledge of Church-membership, which the initiatory Sacraments of either dispensation confessedly are, no visible Church acknowledges him ; he is consequently without Church character, without designation and name.

Let the two Christian Parents then, whom we suppose to be discussing this subject, place themselves just in the position of this converted Jew, at the first establishment of the Gospel, with all his previous knowledge, preparatory habits, and introductory education for the substitution of water for blood as the emblem, and

Baptism for Circumcision as the Sacrament; and let them add to this the sweet and blessed character of the Gospel, full of encouragement and invitation and promise, demanding faith, and discouraging doubt and hesitation and distance—and will they not see, that the transition from Circumcision to Baptism is natural and easy, and that Baptism is just the very privilege which the Church, so richly redeemed, might expect from the kindness and condescension of her covenant God?

I must confess, my Dear Friend, so deeply impressed is my mind with this view of Baptism,—and I would speak it with the utmost lowliness that dust and ashes should assume when speaking of the gracious dispensations of Almighty wisdom and love—that had I been a Jew converted to Christianity at that early time, with all my previous associations and prepossessions, on comparing the two dispensations together, I should have been disposed, to have complained, that the archetype did not answer to its type, nor the building correspond with the scaffolding, had Baptism been wanting in the new dispensation, as the pledge of covenant mercies to the Children of the faithful: and I must yet go further, and say, that if this view be correct, so prepared was the mind of the Church for this substitution of one Sacrament for the other, as the initiatory pledge of covenant blessings to her Children, as to render the explicit mention of

baptising Children, in the final commission to teach and baptise all nations, wholly superfluous ; that in the then prepared state of the Christian mind for this application of the ordinance to Children, it would have been as unnecessary to say, “ administer this baptism to Infants,” as at the institution of the other Sacrament it would have been an unnecessary announcement to have said, “ do not you only receive this in remembrance of me, but let your women receive it also.” Nor does it appear to me, that the general custom of the Church for centuries thus to apply the promise of mercy to Infants, would ever have been either interrupted or questioned, had not declining doctrine and declining practice found it necessary to contradict the doctrine, or counteract the practice of Infant-baptism in earlier times ; or a too hasty attempt to prevent the mischiefs arising from the abuse of the practice in the general laxity of a mere Christian profession, have induced some in these latter times, to innovate rather than to reform, and to abolish the privilege, rather than to correct the scandal of an undue administration of it.

And surely the general custom of the Church of Christ through all ages from the institution of Baptism, as it may be collected from history, affords no small encouragement to these Parents to baptise their Infants. Origen, who lived one hundred and ten years after the Apostles, says,

" For this also it was, that the Church had from the Apostles a tradition-[or order] to give baptism even to infants."¹ And again, " Besides all this, let it be considered, what is the reason, that whereas the baptism of the Church is given for forgiveness of sins, infants also are, by the usage of the Church² baptised; when if there were nothing in Infants that wanted forgiveness and mercy, the grace of baptism would be needless to them."

Augustine's testimony is very full and explicit, and brings down the evidence to three hundred years from the time of the Apostles. " And if any one do ask for divine authority in this matter ; though that which the whole Church practises, and which has not been instituted by Councils, but was ever in use, is very reasonably believed to be no other than a thing delivered [or ordered] by authority of the Apostles ;³ yet we may besides take a true estimate, how much the Sacrament of Baptism does avail Infants, by the circumcision which God's former people received."

" But the *custom* of our Mother the Church in baptising infants must not be disregarded, nor

¹ " Pro hōc et Ecclesia ab Apostolis traditionem suscepit etiam parvulis baptismum dare." Wall, vol. i. pp. 54, 55.

² " Secundūm Ecclesiæ observantiam," &c. Wall i. 53.

³ " Quanquam quod universa tenet Ecclesia, nec consiliis institutum, sed semp̄ retentum est, non nisi autoritate Apostolicā traditum rectissimē creditur," &c. Wall i. 105.

be accounted needless, nor believed to be other than a tradition [or order] of the Apostles.”¹

It is clear to my mind from these extracts, and from others which might be produced from their works, that for the first three centuries the baptising of Infants was the general “usage” and “custom” of the Church, that which was “not instituted by Councils,” because unnecessary, it being “that which the whole Church practises.” The cases of Tertullian and Gregory Nazianzen are evident exceptions to the general sentiment and practice of the Church, and therefore corroborate the evidence for the universal reception of Infant-baptism among Christians, since the exception proves the rule. And throughout all subsequent ages, from the days of Augustine to this hour, the same remark may be made; those who do not baptise their Infants at this day, are exceptions in the Church of Christ; the Universal Church throughout the world concurring in the practice, as it ever has

¹ “Consuetudo tamen matris Ecclesiæ in baptizandis parvulis nequaquam spernenda est, neque ullo modo superflua deputanda, nec omnino credenda nisi Apostolica esse traditio.” Wall i. 213.

My reason for referring to Wall is, because his work purports to be a History of Infant-baptism, and abounds with original information from the Fathers; to the extracts from whose writings an easy reference may be made. My appeal to him is more for documents than sentiments; though I am obliged to him for both.

done, as is apparent from the history of its creed and usage.¹

But these Parents will not only be confirmed in their favorable sentiments of Infant-baptism

¹ In order to invalidate the force of this conclusion, drawn from the general habit of the primitive Church, as apparent from history, an attempt is made at once to depreciate the authority of these primitive times, by representing that it was their custom to administer to Infants the Sacrament of the Eucharist as well as that of Baptism. But let the question be fairly stated. No mention is found of this practice before the time of CYPRIAN, one hundred and fifty years after the times of the Apostles; and he does not speak of Infants, but of a child four or five years old; nor after him till the time of AUGUSTINE and INNOCENT of Rome, three hundred years from the same times, from whose authority the practice seems to have spread throughout the West for the following six hundred years; during which time it was adopted by the Greek Church. It declined in the West about the year one thousand, when the Church of Rome, beginning to entertain the doctrine of Transubstantiation, no longer gave the holy elements to Infants, though probably to this day, it is continued in the Greek Church, as it was observed by it, about a century since. [See Wall ii. 446.] It is obvious to remark on this account, that the practice of administering the Sacrament of the Eucharist to Infants was unknown for a Century and a half after the Apostolic times, and that its existence even then is uncertain; that it wants the stamp of that primitive authority, which derives its virtue from the well-known axiom, "that which is first is true." And as it is not so *early* as the Baptism of Infants, neither, if it ever did obtain so general usage in the Church, was it ever *general* till after the time of AUGUSTINE and INNOCENT of Rome, three hundred years from the Apostles, when the Churh was overrun with corruptions both of doctrine and practice. The cases, therefore, seem by no means parallel.

by the above considerations, and others of a similar character which might be adduced : there is yet a species of evidence on this question, unheeded alas ! in the noise of controversy, but whose mild and persuasive voice is peculiarly acceptable to the faithful Parent, desirous of assuring himself that his Child is within the covenant of mercy, and that he should be privileged with the seal of so distinguished a blessing. I mean the evidence that flows from the peculiarly mild and lovely character of the Gospel, as a dispensation of mercy ; such as the following :

Without Baptism, Children seem to be more considered under the Law than under the Gospel.

Without Baptism, faith fails of its due encouragement, the promise and the Sacrament to confirm it.

Without Baptism, the Church gives the Children of the faithful no accrediting mark of entrance into its communion ; or that they are partakers of its interests, its sympathies, and its prayers : In a word, they are without covenant name, and character, because without the confirmatory seal.

It is consistent with the nature of the Gospel, to give to a doubt the most favourable, and not the most harsh construction.

It is a want of charity to the whole Communion of Saints, both glorified and militant, to decline from the universal practice of the Church, in

filling up the ranks of her members, throughout all ages, by the Baptismal admission of the Children of the faithful to her notice and regard.

And surely the faithful Parent desirous of Baptismal blessings for his Child, may feel a want of assurance in the absence of such ordinance, as the covenanted seal of mercy,—of the maternal care of the Church,—of God the Father, as the reconciled Father of his Child in Christ Jesus,—of the kind encouraging interest of him who said, “Suffer the little children to come unto me,”—and of the regeneration of “the Spirit of adoption;” the Sacrament of Baptism being the great accrediting “means” by which he receives the same, as well as “a pledge” to assure him of it.

But as the spirit of these suggestions will, by God’s blessing, be more or less enforced in the following pages, I will offer but one more remark under this head: which is, that a faithful man will be equally fearful of wronging the mercy of God in Christ, and of depriving the Infants of the faithful of their rich boon of mercy, by contracting the scriptural expressions of privilege by any human reasonings: he will rather give them the largest meaning that faith can apply to them, “the length and breadth of all the plain as far as faith can see.”

Consider the expressions of our Lord’s commission to baptise: “Go ye therefore, and teach

all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father,”¹ &c. : a large portion of every nation consists of Infants: the original promise to Abraham was, “ in thy seed shall all the *nations* of the earth be blessed ;” the Infants of Abraham’s own nation were capable of spiritual blessings, of which their Circumcision was the pledge; and, if so, surely the Infants of all other nations are capable of spiritual blessings also, of which Baptism is now the pledge. If it does not appear to some that there is any intentional allusion made by our Lord, in adopting the word “ *nations*,” to the same word used in the original grant of the blessing to the Father of the faithful of all nations, whether Jew or Gentile; faith, on the contrary, sees that our Lord, in adopting the same expression, would convey the same covenant blessings to the Infants of all nations, sealing them under the Gospel not with blood, but with water. Thus as Abraham is the Father of the faithful of all nations, so the promise is thus made sure to all the seed.

I present the following passage to the faith of every Christian Parent, and leave it to the acceptance of this efficient Interpreter.

“ And they brought young children [infants²] to him, that he should touch them : and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But

¹ Matt. xxviii. 19.

² Luke xviii. 15.

when Jesus saw it he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.”¹ Let faith but interpret the circumstances, the persons, the words, and the blessing of the above passage, and love will never have to complain that one Infant has been withheld from Baptismal privileges.

Let the same Interpreter give the sense of the following passage, and the faithful Parents shall be filled with holy fear, lest in withholding their Child from Baptismal blessings, they subject themselves to the charge of “offending” the spiritual welfare of him, who in virtue of the promise is accounted a believer. “At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, verily, I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso

¹ Mark x. 13.

shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”¹

The last passage I will select as the subject of holy fear, lest in omitting the Baptism of his Infant, the faithful Parent should violate its meaning, is that which the Church of Christ for fifteen hundred years, from its early institution to the days of the Reformation, has ever applied to Baptism; “Jesus answered, Verily, Verily, I say unto thee, Except a man² be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” It is well known that the early Fathers of the Church gave the most rigorous interpretation to these words, proceeding so far on the letter of the text, as to exclude from heaven such persons, whether Infants or others, as had not been baptised. But abating the rigour of this interpretation, a faithful Parent, alive to the spiritual interests of his Child, may not suffer it to pass him without its due impression. Certainly “God is not tied to means,” and damnation is not awarded to him that is not baptised, but to him “that believeth not;”

¹ Matt. xviii. 1—6.

² εἰς μὴ τίσ, except a Person, i. e. *every one, a man,* generally comprehending all our human nature: John'iii. 5.

still as the words of the passage, as interpreted for ages by the general sense of the Church, seem to connect the outward seal with the inward blessing, the faithful Parent will be desirous that his Infant should be a partaker of the outward seal, that he may, by fulfilling the word, “fulfil all righteousness” also.¹

¹ If an excessive and too exclusive sense may have been given to this text, as applicable to Baptism by the Church before the Reformation; has not too low and indistinct a sense as specially applicable to that Sacrament been given to it by many since that time? It is true such passages as the following occur both in the Old and New Testament. “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and make you clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them.” Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27. It is true also that “Spirit” is exegetical or explanatory of its figure “water.” And to what has the figure a reference but to the divers washings or baptisms [διαφοροίς Βαπτισμοῖς] of the legal dispensation spoken of by the Apostle, Heb. ix. 10. This dispensation was confessedly preparatory to that of the Gospel. Now it is the privilege of him who enjoys the full light of day to look back on, and to decypher the imperfect shadows of the morning. It is the province of the Gospel to explain the meaning of the Law. May we not stand then on the eminence afforded us by the positive institution of Baptism, as literally interpreted and as confirmed by the practice of almost the whole Christian world, and thus give a substance to the shadows of the law?

First here is a preparatory process in the “divers washings”

As some of these passages will meet us again in the course of this discussion, I forbear from all further comment on them here, and merely

of the Legal ceremonies ; then a frequent reference is made to these as anticipative illustrations of that spiritual purity which was to distinguish the day of the Gospel, as above. Then, as it seems, the Jews gave a practical application to this illustration by the Baptismal reception of proselytes. Next the shadows assume a more substantial appearance in the Baptism of repentance, which marked *his* ministry, who came to prepare the way of the Lord, and to whom “ went out Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.” A stronger light was imparted in the Baptism of *him* whom thus it became “ to fulfil all righteousness.” With the advantage of this light we come to the much-contested passage, John iii. 5. to which, if the context be considered, I am not aware that any passage strictly parallel can be found. Our Lord first informs Nicodemus, that without regeneration, no person can *see* or comprehend the kingdom of God : and on the Jewish Ruler expressing his surprise, he proceeds further to inform him how the entrance into this kingdom is to be effected, and this is by being “born of water and of the Spirit ;” of “water,” which, by what he and “Jerusalem” had seen in John’s Baptism, was the figure of spiritual purification, and of the “Spirit” of which the water was the significant emblem : which Baptism, when the kingdom of God was established should be its initiatory rite of admission, and which he would fully understand hereafter. Accordingly at ver. 22. of the same chapter it is said, “After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea : and there he tarried with them, and baptized.” [See also iv. 1, 2.] And a very few years after at most his meaning receives a full developement in the institution of the Sacrament of Baptism ; “Go ye therefore, and teach [or disciple] all nations, baptizing

adduce them as scriptures which strongly apply to the holy fear of a faithful Parent, lest by withholding his Child from Baptism, he should at once be guilty of an offence to that which is

them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

In the antient Church, when the Sacraments were duly estimated, and they continued " daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house ;" Acts ii. 46. such a retrospect from light to obscurity, would probably have been entertained. In the modern Church where the Sacraments seem not to be regarded with the same portion of esteem as means of grace, such a retrospect is considered by many as more than questionable. The thing signified is admitted, but the Sacramental sign of such signification is denied.

Will not those who hold this text as inapplicable to Baptism do well to pause before they arrive at a peremptory decision, when they consider that when the "fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea," even these simple figures were applicable to Baptism, as they "were all baptised unto Moses, in the cloud and in the sea, 1 Cor. x. 1, 2. And as faith could behold God "figuring thereby" his "holy Baptism," may not the same faith equally extract a Baptismal meaning from words surrounded by so much more luminous a reference from the time, and circumstances, and person, at and by which they were uttered?

The text need not be the subject of strife; neither kind of Baptism is dependent on it; and like other similar questions, Baptism rests not its evidence on one text. But I own that the above retrospect seems to me to justify the sense entertained of this passage by the Church for fifteen hundred years, almost without interruption, as applicable to water-baptism, as well as the adoption of this sense by our Church in the large use she makes of this text both in her adult and infant Baptismal services.

most dear to him of all his earthly blessings, and to the letter of the word of God.

In presenting these grounds of Infant-baptism, I must repeat what was said in the outset of this Letter, that it is by no means my object to attempt a statement of all the grounds which may be adduced in its favour. The view here given, brief as it is, is quite satisfactory to my own mind, and, as it appears to me, will fully authorise every faithful man to present his Child at the font of Baptismal blessedness, with an assured confidence in the promise of a gracious God, that his Child is thus sealed as “a member of Christ, the Child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven.”

The believing Parent who has arrived at the above conclusion respecting Baptism, will select Christian Sponsors and joyfully introduce his Child to the full Congregation, that he may enjoy the prayers and spiritual sympathies of the Church. Most heartily will he join in the antecedent prayers for a blessing on the Sacrament; most earnestly will he dissipate all doubt of a favourable reception; and his Child being privileged with the sign and seal of the sacramental blessing, most ardently will he yield his thanks to the Father of mercies, “that it hath pleased” him to “regenerate” his Infant with his “Holy Spirit, to receive” him “for his own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into” his “holy Church.” And while he constantly

pleads the promise, he acts like a man who verily believes that it shall be accomplished to him and his Child. He watches his opening faculties, he impresses on him the value of the privileges with which he is invested, he reminds him that the vows of God are upon him, and stimulates him to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith" he is "called."¹ He sows in hope, and he trusts that he shall be a "partaker of his hope."²

The Christian, who thus presents his Child at the font for Baptism in our Church, wishes not that one word should be altered, either in the Baptismal Service, or in the formularies more immediately connected with it. He can neither part with the fervent supplications for a blessing, nor with the rich and confident ascriptions of praise for mercies so graciously bestowed and so firmly ratified and sealed; nor would he wish the tone of their expression to be lowered in the smallest degree, for he feels and acts upon this principle, "according to your faith be it unto you."³

It is this principle of faith in the promise that actuates the whole course of the education of his Child. This Child is "a member of Christ," and is to be educated on this persuasion both with respect to his Parent and to himself. His

¹ Eph. iv. 1. ² 1 Cor. ix. 10.

³ Matt. ix. 29.

resources therefore are not in himself but in Christ, and he is habitually taught, as a poor impotent sinner, to go out of himself for spiritual strength, and to call upon God "by diligent prayer," i. e. a holy habitual diligence in prayer, for that spiritual power which is sufficient for every occasion, and which is only to be found in Christ : so that as the member retains life no longer than the head influences the body of which it is a part, so it is vain for him to hope for spirituality unless the supply is constantly supported by the grace of Christ. Here is a provision for a holy walk, and a Christian conversation. If the weakness of nature shows itself in idleness, the Parent, acting thus in faith, persuades his Child to call upon God for diligence and attention. If some self-denying duty is to be performed, the Parent will encourage him to hope for ability from God to discharge it. In the commission of faults, he will be taught to lament them as sins, to confess them to God, to deplore the weakness of his fallen nature, and to ask forgiveness through the merits of that Saviour who is the God of his salvation. And under a due sense of his sinfulness, the Christian Parent will encourage his Child : "For me I am a sinner as you are, and most readily forgive you ; it is a light thing for me to do. Your offence is against God : go to him, and ask forgiveness of him." And such a season may be improved into one of deep and

lasting impression, if the Parent joins his prayers to those of the Child, and with confession of sins pleads the promises of pardon to every penitent that approaches God in faith, and casts himself on his mercy.

In the habitual renunciation of "the sinful lusts of the flesh," this Christian Parent will not teach his Child to expect happiness from the attainment of any thing that is *exquisite*. The ordinary circumstances, and every-day occurrences of life present but very little to gratify an exquisite taste ; they are rather marked by an opposite character, and frequently call for the exercise of self-denial in the toleration of what is mean, and low, and shabby and offensive. Not only does such a mistake in education expose its subject to constant disappointment, repining, and complaint, but also to that wide-wasting pestilence which seems to me to prove the curse of the Church at this time, a fastidious spirit, ever coveting something more and something higher, for which nothing is sufficiently good or sufficiently refined, and which is equally hostile to *usefulness* in practice and *simplicity* in faith.¹ Much less will such a

¹ It is a question well worth considering, not whether the Belles Lettres, or the accomplishments of literature, should be encouraged ; but *how far* they should be encouraged in an education which regards man as an immortal being, and proposes the honor of God and human usefulness as its aim. Sound principle, just taste, and practical wisdom, are the

Parent on whom Baptismal obligations to his Child have any hold, enflame those passions he is bound to controul, by the excitements of theatrical exhibitions, dancing, light and trifling parties of pleasure, novel-reading, and all those loose and fashionable amusements, which directly tend to the undue excitement of passion, rather than to its wholesome restraint, and which in the very teeth of Baptismal requirements seem now to be considered as legitimate accomplishments of the professing Christian world.

Neither were the vows of Baptism considered as valid, could a Parent with any consistency, teach his child to admire "the pomps and vanities of this wicked world," by gratifying a worldly taste, and by taking him to the exhibition of this pomp in splendid *spectacles*, and the garish display of public festivity, as calculated to excite his admiration, and to attract his esteem. His respect for the civil and political institutions of his country, will arise from a purer source, and depend on a more solid foundation. That "first commandment with promise,¹" will

main ingredients of such a character. Can that which is intensely refined consist with what is practical, and that which is exquisite with that which is useful? And does not the general fastidiousness of our day, compel us to the deliberate consideration of this question, and counsel us rather to qualify our refinement, than to encourage it?

¹ Ephes. vi. 2.

assure him that as all his relative duties are performed, so will his “days be long in the land which the Lord” his “God has given” him for a residence during his sojourn upon earth; and as the exercise of his graces, and the discharge of his duties, will be a constant blessing to his country; so his care for the preservation of every private and public blessing will call upon him to defend her from civil commotion from within, and from foreign invasion from without; and his respect for all superior relations will take its rise from that primitive obligation specified by the commandment to “honour his father and mother;” for as he has been taught this first discharge of duty, so may he be expected, in after life, to discharge the other relative duties which embrace the whole circle of his private and public obligations—husband, master and servant, minister and people, magistrate and subject. He will thus be taught, not to look up to the possession of rank or place with ambitious views of self-aggrandisement, but to be content with that station to which it has pleased God to call him: or should it be the will of God, that he quit the walk of private life for the distinction of public employment, he will accept the office as the instrument of general usefulness, chiefly desirous to direct his own energies, and those of all within his influence to the promotion of the best interests of

mankind, in the spread of the Gospel upon earth.

Invested with the high distinction of “a member of Christ,” his Parent will teach him that this is no futile designation, that his privileges are real and substantial, and that the honor of his Saviour demands no equivocal exhibition of them to the world: that neither condition nor circumstance divest him of this prominent character: that with Nebuchadnezzar on the throne a public and penitent confession of sin is the truest honor of his imperial dignity; or with Joseph in the prison, the most striking declaration of his innocence is that meek and upright deportment, which shall inspire unre-served confidence, and submit the liberty of the prisoner to himself as the reward of his own virtuous conduct. That the mansion and the cottage, the parlour and the kitchen, present various duties, and exercise tempers and appetites and passions from which his character as a “member of Christ” is not suspended even for a moment: that all times relations and situations demand his recognition of his own holy and heaven-born designation; and that it is at once his privilege and his calling to “show out of a good conversation;”—and that conversation embracing the whole field of human usefulness, the whole play of human talent, the unsparing regulation of human temper, and the unabated

effort of human energies—his “works with meekness of wisdom.”¹

How different a character then, does education assume, with respect to the Parent’s part, when thus conducted under the sense of Baptismal obligations! a new class of motives is applied, and a positive attainment of holiness is expected. Under such a system, the wonder will be, not as at present, that a young Child should be really holy, but that a Child thus educated should not be holy. This Christian Parent looks upon his Child really as “a member of Christ,” endeavours to invest him with all the privileges to which he is entitled as a “Child of God;” and considers that he has an unquestionable title to the inheritance of glory. For this his whole education is intended to qualify him, even to make him “meet to be a partaker of the inheritance with the Saints in light.”²

Only let us substitute the constraining sweetness of the Baptismal promise for the dry authority of the legal precept, and as the principle savours of the mercy of the gospel, the conduct it produces will be the holiness of the Gospel also. Its rich uniting influence will form the firmest cement of attachment between the Parent and the Child. The love of God will originate

¹ James iii. 13.

² Col. i. 12.

the love of man ; and while the Parent no longer complains of despised authority, misplaced confidence, and defeated hopes—the Child conscious of his privileges discharges duty as a pleasure ; to displease his Parent is to displease his God, and this is most displeasing to himself.

LETTER III.

THE SPONSOR.

THE Sponsor's warrant to undertake for the Child seems to rest on the same promises which encourage the Parent : the one being the natural, the other the spiritual Parent, the God-father. And thus King Edward the Sixth's Catechism equally accepts the profession of either. " For the young babes, their Parents' or the church's profession sufficeth."¹ The Sponsor therefore undertakes his duty in faith of the promise, and, according to his opportunities, provides for the spiritual education of the Child. He pleads the promises ; he bears his charge upon his heart in prayer ; and it is his desire to acquit himself to the Church of the trust she has reposed in his spiritual vigilance, and parental superintendence in Christ.

The institution of Sponsors for the Infant baptised seems to be coeval with Infant-Baptism. It is mentioned by Tertullian one hundred years

¹ Fathers of the English Church, ii. 369.

from the Apostles' times incidentally, as though it were the ordinary practice of the Church.¹ And both the existence and manner of Sponsorship, as practised in the primitive times, are thus detailed by Augustine. "But I would not have you mistake so as to think that the bond of guilt derived from Adam may not be broken, unless the children be offered for receiving the grace of Christ by their own Parents. For so you speak in your letter, "that as the Parents were authors of the punishment, so they may also by the faith of their Parents be justified." Whereas you see that a great many are offered not by their Parents, but by any other persons. As the infant slaves are sometimes offered by their masters : and sometimes when the Parents are dead, the infants are baptised, being offered by any that can afford to shew this compassion on them. And sometimes infants whom their Parents have cruelly exposed to be brought up by those that light on them, are now and then taken up by the holy virgins, and offered to baptism by them who have no children of their own, nor design to have any. And in all this there is nothing else done than what is written in the Gospel, when our Lord asked who was neighbour to him that was wounded by thieves, and left half dead in the road ? And it was answered, "He that shewed mercy on him."²

¹ Wall i. 43.

² Ibid. i. 195.

It seems clear from the above extract, not only, as Wall remarks, that both Augustine, and Boniface, to whom he writes, “take it for granted that Infants are to be baptised,” and “that the ordinary use then was for the Parents to answer for their Children ;” but that any person, who undertook the charitable work of bringing up the destitute Child, whether the masters of slaves, the friends of orphans adopted, or the holy virgins who educated the exposed Children as their own, in performing an act of charity to the body, performed a still greater act of charity to the soul, by presenting such Infants for the seal of the covenant mercies of the Church in Baptism, of whose pious education they undertook the responsibility. The Church, at that time, committing the spiritual care of the Infant to the person who engaged to be his natural Parent.

And is it an improbable suggestion, that the present requisition of the Church—that the spiritual friends of the family should be received as Sponsors, in preference, or rather in addition, to the natural Parents of the Child—arose from this custom of receiving the natural guardian of the Child as its Sponsor in Baptism ? It is in effect the same, whether the Parent appears by himself in person, or by the Sponsor deputed by him. The act of the Sponsor, in presenting the Child, is assumed by the Church as having the sanction of the Parent ; and on this assumption

she acts in confirming the choice of the Parent, by committing the spiritual interests of the Child to the Sponsor approved by him. The entrusting the Child to the spiritual care of the Sponsor, is, in fact, the work of the Church, who says to every Sponsor as Pharaoh's daughter did to the mother of Moses, "Take this child away, and nurse it for me."¹ The Church considers the character of the Parent as represented by the Sponsor : his character, as interpreted by his profession, and the office which he voluntarily undertakes before the congregation, is her security, under God, for the spiritual education of the Infant. To him she commits her charge ; he voluntarily accepts the responsibility ; and that she may not be disappointed in her hope by the death or default of the parties, she appoints three Sponsors to every Child she receives.

. And now, let *prudence* interpret this usage of the Church in the appointment of Sponsors. The Parents, who presented their Infants for Baptism in primitive times, were such as the Church might safely entrust with the superintendence of the young of the flock. Persecution then sifted character, and the hazard of a Christian profession was then a security for its reality. But in process of time, when a Christian profession was established by fashion, as at the pre-

¹ Exodus ii. 9.

sent day, it was prudent, as doubtless it was necessary, for the Church to require an additional security : and as the Parent, if truly Christian, would necessarily train up the Child to the consistent enjoyment of the covenant mercies sealed by his Baptism, and to the discharge of the corresponding duties incumbent on him to perform ; so in the defect of the real holiness of the Parent, the Church kindly provided for the spiritual welfare of the Infant, by requiring holy Sponsors to undertake the charge, which according to their opportunities they were expected to fulfil.

And next, let *charity* interpret this usage of the Church in the appointment of Sponsors to her Infants. First in giving the promise its largest interpretation, and assuming that it is made to her and every Infant she receives into her communion ; so that not only does each Parent undertake for his baptised Child, not only every particular Sponsor, but every individual of that communion of saints into which the Child is received, is its spiritual Parent also : and any interpretation of the promise short of this, does not fully invest the Child with the interests and privileges of the spiritual communion into which it is admitted ; nor does it give to that communion of saints the full interest of that affectionate relation in which it stands towards the Child it has adopted. Thus the Child is the child of the Church, and the

Sponsor is the particular member of the body, presented by the Parent, and approved by the Church, to which the Church commits her own responsibility of training up the Infant for God.

Let the same blessed charity interpret the usage of the Church in calling upon Sponsors to undertake their interesting charge. And did the masters of slaves, the voluntary guardians of orphans, and the holy virgins kindly undertake the charitable office of being Sponsors to destitute Infants in that day, and is it a less charitable office for Christians to undertake the same kind responsibility at this? Were unprotected slaves, parentless Infants, and Children exposed to perish, the subjects of holy concern to these primitive believers, and are the Infants of professing Christians at this day, who, but for the interference of some real believer in Christ, are likely to be brought up in nothing better than the formality, and vanity, and worldly-mindedness of their Parents, not equally the subjects of the charitable consideration of Christian Sponsors at this? what is this but the commonest exercise of charity? "In all this there is nothing else done (as Augustine well remarks) than what is written in the Gospel, when our Lord asked who was neighbour to him that was wounded by thieves, and left half dead in the road? and it was answered, "He that shewed mercy on him."

Let us consider the undertaking of the Sponsor

in this same light as our Church does, consistently with the view entertained by the Church of old, as a "charitable act," a kind expression of Christian love, consulting the best interests of the Child baptised, and we shall approach the consideration of our subject with the spirit that it demands.

But first, it is incumbent on us to remark the too general negligence of those who undertake this solemn office. And here, My Dear Friend, I find myself so deeply involved in this general charge of neglect, that were not the cause of truth paramount to that of private feeling, a sense of my own negligence would induce me to be wholly silent on this subject. But I must indeed acknowledge, not only that "I am not better than my Fathers,"¹ but that Tamar is "more righteous than I:"² and I would be so far from taking refuge under the broad shield of universal delinquency, that as our return to what is right must be individual before it can be general, so I am desirous that my particular share in the commission of this evil may meet with its particular share of reparation. And it is my fervent prayer, that a ten-fold clearer view of the advantages of Baptism than I entertain, and a ten-fold deeper impression of the mischiefs which result from our neglect of them than I feel, may be entertained and felt by every mem-

¹ 1 Kings xix. 4.

² Gen. xxxviii. 26.

ber of our Established Church ; that a proportionate degree of reparation may be made to our Church, by the increased vigilance and more active superintendence of her Sponsors, and thus her children become really possessed of the spiritual blessings which are their unquestionable birthright.

May I therefore assume, and lament the fact as indisputable, that the duties of this solemn office of Sponsor, have sunk into general desuetude among us ? That some consider the mere undertaking of the duty in private, or at the font, as all that the office demands—that some politely comply with it as the receipt of a compliment—that others accept the offer, or make it, as an earnest of subsequent favorable testamentary dispositions towards the baptised,—and that even those who deem the promises they have made for the Child as important, yet show a very inadequate sense of this importance by any after attention they may bestow on their charge. Nay, is it not yet further notorious, that many conscientious Churchmen hesitate to undertake the office of Sponsor at all, under their impression of the weight of the duties, the performance of which it implies ; and that such can only be persuaded to become Sponsors to children of decidedly pious Parents, under the condition often expressed, and oftener implied, that the Parents will be responsible for the education of the Child, and thus disengage them

from the due discharge of their office ? In these different ways, whether from ignorance, fashion, or, shall I say, mistaken principle, it is but too evident that the office of Sponsor becomes a dead letter, a name without a thing.

Or put the case in another way : let it be supposed that Parents as generally required of the Godfathers and Godmothers of their Children, the serious performance of the duties which so solemn a name imports, as they are at present negligent in making such requirement. That "after" the "promise made by Christ," their Infant should "also faithfully for his part, promise by his Sureties (until he come of age to take it upon himself) that he will renounce the devil and all his works, and constantly believe God's holy word, and obediently keep his commandments :" and that before their entrance upon such office, a solemn engagement were required of the Sponsors, that they would periodically examine their charge, as to his religious progress, and generally interest themselves in his spiritual welfare, more especially remembering him in their prayers. Could we, in the utmost latitude of charity, believe that such offer would be generally acceptable ? rather as Sponsors now act, would not such a requirement, viz. to discharge the duties of the office, be the most certain inducement with such Sponsors to decline the acceptance of it ?

To what a lamentable state then, is the office

of Sponsor reduced among us, when it is generally undertaken on the assumption that it is a sinecure ; and when even conscientious men engage in it, on the condition that the Parents are virtually responsible for the charge, while they themselves are free from the obligation of their own promises and vows.

But can we subscribe to this decision of good and pious men on this subject ? are they not attending more to their fears than their faith ? and is this the line of conduct which faith demands of them in our present juncture of spiritual depression ? " By whom shall Jacob arise,"¹ if those, who are most eminently qualified to assist him, shrink in the hour of difficulty, appalled by a mischief, the very extent of which should form one of their strongest motives to exertion ? To whom can spiritual responsibility be reasonably confided but to spiritual men ? If Baptism be any thing more than a ceremony, who shall rightly appreciate its value, and teach others rightly to appreciate it, but spiritual men ? Who shall practically confute that wide-wasting position, that " every externally baptised person is necessarily regenerated ; " but the man, who practically shows, that it is the wildest enthusiasm to expect the end without using the means ; and that to instruct a Child that he is enjoying the privilege of " a member of Christ, the child

¹ Amos vii. 5.

of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven," while no care is taken, that he shall really renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, vitally believe in Jesus Christ as his Saviour, readily obey the will of God, and habitually walk in his laws—is the most cruel delusion, and can terminate in nothing but the most hopeless disappointment? Who, but the tried soldier of Christ, shall courageously oppose the evil prevalence of a perverted Sacrament, mischievous almost as the mass itself, and recover the professing Protestant world to the sound conviction, that "if the Lord be" our "God," we must "follow him;" and if Christ be our Saviour, we must "manfully fight under his banner, against sin, the world, and the devil, and continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants to our life's end?"

And if this declining of good men to accept the office of Sponsor be an evidence of weak faith in the promise of God, is it not, as might be expected, the evidence of a cold and calculating charity also? Had such men accompanied Gregory through the streets of Rome, when the helpless state of some of our British ancestors, publicly exposed to sale as slaves, attracted his Christian regard, would they not have rejoiced in the ability to have given liberty to the bodies of their captive countrymen? And if that ability had extended to the purchase of one or more of those interesting children, would they not

have rejoiced to have introduced them into the Christian Church by Baptism,—willingly have undertaken the responsibility of educating them according to the requisition of the Church in Christian principles and Christian practice,—and have deemed it the most acceptable exercise of charity, to have been thus instrumental in saving souls from death, and in investing them with all the privileges of a Christian communion, ever pleading the divine promise in prayer for the accomplishment of so desirable an object ? Ecclesiastical history records that it was among the brightest exercises of primitive charity for Christians to liberate unhappy slaves from their bondage ; and doubtless, in addition to corporeal liberty, they endeavoured to communicate to them that richer liberty of the soul from the thraldom of sin. And were African and New Zealand children at this time exposed for sale as slaves in the streets of London, would not really Christian men delight in emancipating such both from corporeal and spiritual bondage ? And where is the difference ? Can we cast our eyes around the streets of our vast metropolis, or indeed throughout the cities, and towns, and villages of the land, without discovering, as it were, at every step, objects who should excite similar pity, and who really need the same commiserating attention—“ baptised Infidels,” baptised worldlings, baptised ignorants, baptised formalists, baptised profligates, baptised of all

descriptions of sinners, who instead of renouncing the world, the flesh, and the devil, exhibit in too glowing colours the very characters which drew tears from the eyes of an Apostle ; who under a Christian profession “ WALK as enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things ? ”¹ Surely, my Dear Friend, as it is no charity to shut our eyes upon truth, so wide a waste of moral barrenness and spiritual death, may well excite the most awakened feelings of every real Christian, and call forth that charity, the distinguishing character of which is to promote the everlasting interest of the soul.

But I think I hear it said, the cases are widely different : a slave redeemed would be wholly in my own power ; I might either take him into my family, or so dispose of him as to ensure my frequent superintendence of his life : but constituted as society is among us, the Child for whom I engage as Sponsor, must necessarily be under the tutelage of his own Parents and Guardians, so that I cannot know enough of his habits and conduct, to justify my undertaking the training of them.

But may not this objection be met by the following considerations ? Should you be requested by a friend to accept the office of Sponsor

¹ Phil. iii. 18, 19.

to his Child, you are surely justified in accepting it on your own conditions : and may not this Sponsorial right of interference be proposed as a necessary condition of such acceptance ? or should you voluntarily engage in the office, may not the offer be accompanied by the above terms ? or without any conditions expressed, may it not be undertaken under the assumption, that your claims conscientiously to discharge the duties of Sponsor will be allowed ? And after all should a more active interference be discouraged in the education of your charge, you may supply books ; you may avail yourself of such opportunities as present themselves ; and should a total exclusion from his person be the consequence of your benevolent endeavours, still he cannot be excluded from an interest in your prayers. You may then sit down, with the conviction, that, what charity could do, you have done, and are doing : that to do what you can is the limit of charitable ability—“ Let her alone—she hath done what she could : ”¹ that to give what you have is the measure of its means—“ Silver and gold have I none ; but such as I have give I thee : in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk : ”² and, that the design of charity, and not the success of its exertions, is the real gauge of its perfection—“ ready to distribute—willing to communicate.”³ Never let it

¹ Mark xiv. 6, 8.

² Acts iii. 6.

³ 1 Tim. vi. 18.

be forgotten, that it is the character of real charity not so much to calculate on difficulties which may obstruct, as on possibilities which may encourage : and that it is also the character of that genuine faith which gives charity its birth, to sink mountains of difficulty into plains of encouragement, while it brightens dark and distant possibilities into the clearer and nearer assurances of attainment. Shrink not then discouraged and paralized by unbelief, O doubting Christian, from this blessed labour of love ; engage in it on the warrant and encouragement of the divine precept and promise ; use the appointed means ; avail yourself of the opportunities, which the God of mercy presents to you in his providence ; and call down a blessing on your exertions by your faithful prayers, and success shall assuredly be your reward.

Nor can I omit to suggest the large encouragement which our Church gives to Sponsors. First the efficacy of fervent prayer according to the promise, "ask and ye shall have," which she thus pleads ; " So give now unto us that ask ; let us that seek, find ; open the gate unto us that knock ; that this Infant may enjoy the everlasting benediction of thy heavenly washing, and may come to the eternal kingdom which thou hast promised by Christ our Lord."

The Church next, as I apprehend, concentrates the force of all the promises made to believing Parents or Sponsors with respect to

their children, in that one gracious act of our Lord, his kind invitation, and reception of young Children, as recorded by St. Mark. x. 13. by a special enumeration of the particulars of so interesting a transaction. First, here are “the words of our Saviour Christ” himself : these words are no less than a command ; “that he commanded the children to be brought unto him : he even blamed those that would have kept them from him :” he proposes their lowness, their docility, and simplicity as the very sum of gracious attainment, as the pattern of heavenly qualification. “He exhorteth all men to follow their innocency.” Nor was this all : for this declaration of “his good will” toward them he confirmed “by his outward gesture and deed ;” for “he embraced them in his arms, he laid his hands upon them, and blessed them.” After this accumulation of blessing, so fully so variously expressed by our Lord, what possible room can there be for doubt and hesitation, that he is less willing now to receive “young children” to the arms of his benevolence, and to confer his blessing upon them, than he was “in the days of his flesh ?” “Doubt ye not therefore, but earnestly believe,” ye kind and feeling and faithful Believers, who are introducing and receiving this Child into the Church of Christ, in expectation of a blessing—Doubt ye not, that he will reject this work of faith and labour of love : no, rather be assured, that as of old, so he will now,

“likewise favourably receive this present Infant; that he will embrace him with the arms of his mercy; that he will give unto him the blessing of eternal life, and make him partaker of his everlasting kingdom.” Then the Church expresses a persuasion of God’s good-will towards the Child presented, and concurs with the Sponsors, and by them the Parents, in one general ascription of praise to God for the same. “Wherefore we—Minister—Sponsors—and Parents if present, (and what Parent if able to attend would decline so interesting a scene) and all the Church present—being thus persuaded of the good-will of our heavenly Father towards this infant, declared by his Son Jesus Christ,” (for this one act of Christ in receiving Children, and blessing them, is the great confirmatory declaration of all the Father’s promises to them)—“and nothing doubting, but that he favourably alloweth this charitable work of ours in bringing this infant to his holy baptism, let us FAITHFULLY and devoutly give thanks unto him,” &c.

I cannot but remark on the above exhortation, how the Church insists on faith in the promise, as the means of any benefit to be derived to the Child about to be baptised. “Doubt ye not therefore, but” on the contrary, “earnestly believe”—“We being thus persuaded”—“nothing doubting”—“faithfully give thanks”—for the Church well knows that

as a man is persuaded of the reality of a promise, so will he use the means to secure its blessings.

After this offering of praise follows a special address to the Sponsors, or Godfathers and Godmothers, recapitulating the subjects of their foregoing prayers, and the Gospel-promise that those prayers shall be granted ; again supporting their faith with the never-to-be-forgotten suggestion, “ which promise, he [Christ] for his part will most surely keep and perform.” Then follows, the requisition to the Sponsors that they will promise as the “ sureties ” of the Infant, “ that he will renounce the devil and all his works, and constantly believe God’s holy word, and obediently keep his commandments.”

We may observe on this address, that it first reminds the Sponsors of the spiritual blessings they have prayed for, and of the promise on which their expectation of them is founded : clearly insisting still on the great principle that pervades the Service, that all Baptismal blessings are grounded on the Gospel, and not on the Law ; that God’s promise of mercy to the Child, precedes the Child’s engagement to be obedient to God ; that God’s mercy depends not on the obedience of the Child, but that the obedience of the Child flows from a sense of the mercy of God to it. “ *Wherefore after this promise made by Christ, this Infant must also faithfully for his part, promise by you that are his Sure-*

ties," &c.—“ Wherefore,” i. e. in consequence of this promise of Christ, the Sureties are both obliged and encouraged to promise obedience for the Child. The Catechism observes the same order; first the Child is taught that at his Baptism he “ was made a member of Christ,” &c. then the promises made for him. The Confirmation Service recognises this order: the Bishop, in his opening prayer, gratefully addressing God, “ who hast vouchsafed to regenerate these thy servants by water and the Holy Ghost, and hast given unto them forgiveness of all their sins : ” here their justification and regeneration, are faithfully and thankfully admitted, and on that admission is grounded further prayer for strength and increase of grace. Thus as Baptismal blessings are the result of mercy, Baptismal obedience is the obedience of faith.¹

¹ This view of adoption as introductory to sanctification is beautifully described by perhaps the most spiritual of the Reformers, Bradford. “ Oh ! how faint is faith in me ! how little is love to thee or thy people, how great is self-love, how hard is my heart ! &c. By the reason whereof I am moved to doubt of thy goodness towards me, whether thou art my father or no, and whether I be thy child or no. Indeed worthily might I doubt if that the having of these were the *causes* and not the *fruits* rather of thy children. The cause why thou art my Father, is, thy mercy, goodness, grace, and truth in Christ Jesus, the which cannot but remain for ever. In respect whereof thou hast borne me this good-will, to accept me into the number of thy children, that I might be holy, faithful, obedient, innocent, &c. And therefore thou wouldest not only make me a

Thus encouraged, the Sponsors solemnly engage "in the name of" the Child, to renounce sin, and all its abettors, to believe the Gospel, and to obey the Law. After which, the whole Church joins in four distinct and most fervid supplications; that every spiritual blessing may be imparted to the Child, now about to be introduced to their communion. Then follows the prayer for the consecration of the element of Baptism, concluding that with the sign the baptised may receive the thing signified also,—"the fulness of thy grace, and ever remain in the number of thy faithful and elect children." The

creature after thy image, enduing me with sight, limbs, shape, form, memory, wisdom &c; where thou mightest have made me a beast, a maimed creature, lame, blind, frantic, &c; but also thou wouldest that I should be born of Christian parents, brought into thy church by baptism, and called divers times by the ministry of thy word into thy kingdom, besides the innumerable other benefits always hitherto poured upon me; all which thou hast done of this thy good will, that thou of thine own mercy barest to me in Christ and for Christ before the world was made; the which thing, as thou requirest straitly that I should believe without doubting, so in all my needs that I should come unto thee as a Father, and make my moan without mistrust of being heard in thy good time, as most shall make to my comfort. Lo! therefore to thee, dear Father, I come, through thy Son our Lord, Mediator, and Advocate Jesus Christ, who sitteth on thy right hand, making intercession for me, and pray thee of thy great goodness and mercy in Christ to be merciful unto me, that I may feel indeed thy sweet mercy as thy child." Fathers of the English Church. Vol. vi. p. 339.

Church assumes, that the Child is one of God's "faithful and elect children" in virtue of the promise, and she prays that he may ever "remain" one of that truly blessed, and highly privileged company.

The Minister then proceeds, formally to invest the Child with his designation as a Christian, and to confer on him the sign, and seal, and pledge, of his Baptismal privileges ; pronouncing the name bestowed on the Child as a Christian, and calling upon him the name of the Triune Jehovah, baptising him "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Then presenting the Child before the assembled Church, the Minister declares in the name of all present : "We receive this Child into the congregation of Christ's flock ;" he then confers on him the badge of his profession ; "and do sign him with the sign of the cross, in token that," in the midst of a world ashamed of its Saviour, "hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified," but decidedly, boldly and resolutely encounter the foes of Christ, "manfully fight under his banner, against sin, the world, and the devil ;" and that he shall persist in this holy warfare to the last gasp of his earthly being, "and continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end." And this interesting reception declared by the Minis-

ter, is confirmed by the express approbation of the whole Church. "Amen."

The Child being thus "regenerated, and grafted into the body of Christ's Church," the Congregation is exhorted to "give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits, and with one accord," as a congregational act, to make their prayers unto him, "that the Child may lead the rest of his life according to this beginning."

And here, I do not see, how any one can conscientiously join with the Church, in the following praise and prayer, who declines to give the full import to those fervent expressions which they fairly and honestly convey. According to the view I have already taken of the privileges conferred by this Sacrament on the faithful, with what perfect accordance, what unreserved and unbosomed thankfulness, what a sincere effusion of holy gratitude will the faithful Parent, and Sponsor, and believer unite in those expressions of praise: "We give thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father," first, "that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this Infant with thy Holy Spirit," not to confer on him the sign only, but the thing signified also—not to impart the seal only, but to bestow an earnest of the blessings sealed—not only to wash the Child with the outward emblem of water, but inwardly to communicate that grace of the Holy Spirit which cleanses from sin. Secondly, "to receive

him for thine own Child by adoption ; " not merely to give him a Christian name, and to enroll him nominally among thy children, but really and truly to receive him into thy family of grace, as " thine own " adopted child, of which thou hast given an assurance by regenerating him by thy Holy Spirit. " And to incorporate him into thy holy Church ; " to which body, he is as vitally united by faith, as the member constitutes a part of the body, and with which he really holds communion in virtue of thy blessing on the Sponsorial engagements now undertaken for him. And since this Child is now " dead unto sin, and living unto righteousness, and is buried with Christ in his death, we humbly beseech thee to grant that," he may have grace to perfect the work thus graciously begun, that he " may crucify the old man, and utterly abolish the whole body of sin ; and that as he is " now " made partaker of the death of thy Son, he may also be partaker of his resurrection, so that finally, with the residue of thy holy Church, he may be an inheritor of thine everlasting kingdom, through Christ our Lord."

I cannot but remark here, that he who views our Baptismal Service in the light that I have represented it, would not willingly alter one of the above expressions ; he would not qualify one word, or lower one of these rich and rapturous specifications of blessings conferred. The terms are admirably adapted to express the awakened

feelings of a believing soul—the combined sentiments and graces, of love and joy and gratitude and praise.

Then follows, if I may so say, the system of Christian education, expressed by our Church, in a few short hints, which do indeed contain the pith and essence of all just education, conducted on Christian principles. No modern system can supersede this ; it may explain, it may expand it, it may build on it as a foundation, but where is the modern treatise of education, that can pretend to come up to the purity and simplicity of these few short hints ? Admired as some of them may have been, does not the very best fall much below these plain and spiritual directions ? and may we not ascribe the comparatively low tone of even the best of modern systems, though written to recommend a Christian education, to the authors of them setting up a model of their own, instead of availing themselves of that already provided for them in the formularies of our Church ? I give them full credit for their benevolent designs, and well-intentioned endeavours : but they have set up a standard of their own ; and by bringing that of the Church into neglect, it may be questioned whether they have not brought it into contempt also. The total and unsparing renunciation of all sin, and the persevering cultivation of all holiness, as a delightful privilege as well as a necessary duty—this is the animating system

of our Church, which stamps it with a truly Gospel character, which gives energy to faith, animation to hope, perseverance to love, and joy to duty. It grounds all its education on a sense of divine mercy; it despatches the Sponsor to his interesting work, relying on the promise of God; and it sends forth the weak and helpless Child into the field of warfare, against the flesh, the world, and the devil, as “a member of Christ,” safe in his protection, and secure of victory, in the strength of “him that loved” him, “and gave himself for” him.¹

The Sponsors then, having been encouraged, throughout the whole of the Service, by the promises ; and having been repeatedly desired not to doubt, but earnestly to believe them, and to give them the largest credit, the Church in her concluding exhortation reminds them of the promises they have made for the Child, and suggests certain particulars as to the mode of carrying these promises into effect. “Forasmuch as this child hath promised by you his Sureties to renounce the devil, and all his works, to believe in God, and to serve him ; ye must remember that it is your parts and duties to see that this Infant be taught, so soon as he shall be able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise, and profession he hath here made by you.” The first subject the Child is to be instructed in, so soon

¹ Gal. ii. 20.

as he can comprehend it, is his Baptismal obligations—the covenant of mercy he is under, and what his Godfathers and Godmothers undertook for him in his Baptism. And how strong a hold on his conscience, would his Parents, and Sponsors, and minister have, were he deeply instructed in the solemnity of the vow he had made, of the awfulness of the promise in which he had engaged, the publicity, and sanctity of the profession he had witnessed, and the privilege of believing, and doing all that was then promised for him. Here attachment to our Church as a holy communion would begin ; it would not rest on fashion, and custom, and loose and vacillating habit, but on reasonable and intelligible grounds of the blessedness and the privilege of the state and communion into which he was called. A Child may be deeply interested by the Sponsor's reading to him, in a simple and engaging manner, the particulars of the Baptismal Service ; explaining to him the important work he then undertook for him, and distinctly calling upon him to observe and give effect to the promises then made ; reminding him how he stands committed to Christ, to his Sponsors, and to the whole Church, for his due observance of the same.

To render this teaching effectual, the Sponsors are further admonished, “And that he may know these things the better ye shall call upon him to hear sermons.” He is next to frequent

the Church, into the Congregation of which he was initiated at his Baptism ; and this, not only to enjoy the Christian communion there, so far as he is able, but also for the purpose of his further “ instruction in righteousness,”¹ by “ hearing sermons.” And this is no unintelligible intimation of what the Church expects the sermons of her ministers should be composed,— even of such materials as a Child may profit by, not of long and wearisome sentences which fatigue the attention, not of dry disquisition and uninteresting detail : but of plain and simple expressions, arresting the attention by forcible appeals to the conscience, winning exhibitions of Christian privileges, and pressing invitations of Gospel mercy and love. Of course there must be many things in every sermon above the comprehension of a Child ; but the great leading character of a Church of England sermon, as here intimated by our Church, is, that in its general matter and manner, its simplicity should engage the attention of a Child. And what subject but that of the mercy of God to sinners in Christ Jesus, the special gift of a Saviour equally necessary to sinful Child as to sinful man, affords that plain, and direct, and intelligible, and interesting path that can attract the attention even of a Child, and that “ the way-faring men, though fools,” should “ not err therein.”²

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 16.

² Isa. xxxv. 8.

But there is yet a more special provision made for the Child's instruction : "and chiefly ye shall provide that he may learn the Creed, the Lord's prayer, and the Ten Commandments in the vulgar tongue." These three particulars constitute the substance of what every Christian child is "bound to believe and to do." The Church Catechism at first consisted but of these three particulars, with the introductory questions and answers on Baptism, the concluding portion on the Sacraments not having been added till some years after : and I apprehend, that, this is "the Short Catechism" mentioned in the opening address of the Confirmation Service, in contra-distinction to the longer, or King Edward's Catechism, which "all school-masters" were enjoined "truly and diligently to teach in" their "schools, immediately after the other brief catechism already set forth." And let these great principles of faith and practice be but duly and perseveringly inculcated by an interesting mode of instruction, as recommended by the Bishop of London to the clergy of his diocese,¹ and let but the more expanded detail of Christian doctrine and practice contained in King Edward's Catechism "immediately" follow, "after the other brief Catechism," as is enjoined, and what an intelligent, ready, and as we might trust, holy communion

¹ Charge of 1822, page 27.

of her youth might our Church present to every Bishop for Confirmation,—a communion, which might animate him in the discharge of duties, however fatiguing, and on which he might look with heavenly complacency as the loveliest exercise of his office.

This chief and main provision for the Child's instruction contains the "Creed," or the leading Articles of that faith which he is to believe,—the "Ten Commandments," or the will of God with respect to man, which is to form his practice ;—and the "Lord's Prayer," which asks for every temporal and spiritual blessing, and the bestowment of that grace, without which he can neither effectually believe the Gospel nor acceptably practise the Law. Sound, solid, and persevering instruction in these three great branches of divinity, conducted in faith and prayer, with the blessing of God, must form the enlightened and efficient believer. And were "all Fathers, Mothers, Masters, Dames," and Sponsors, earnestly and affectionately to persevere in this mode of instructing the Children of the Church, with what hope might they be sent to "the Curate of every Parish, upon Sundays and Holidays," for open instruction in the Church : and how might the faith and love of the assembled Church be animated towards these little ones, in whose favor its prayers and sympathies had been already engaged by the previous introduction of Baptism.

Then follows a most important clause. The Sponsor is to provide that the Child may learn "all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health." The soul, the immortal soul, is the great subject of a Christian education ; and all knowledge and all faith are to be so imparted as they may tend to promote the spiritual health of the immortal soul. And is this the object proposed in the general education of children ? Survey the whole range of education among us, whether domestic, private, or public—whether in the family, at school, or at college, and are the main interests of an immortal soul principally regarded ? Is all instruction regularly and designedly arranged upon this consideration ? "The work we have undertaken is to train up an immortal soul for heaven, and all merely human instruction must be subordinated, and be only auxiliary to this grand leading object ?" Is the Child systematically brought up for earth or for heaven ? are his desires sharpened upon the whetstone of human selfishness, or is he taught the hard duty of self-denial for his soul's sake ? Is he taught to prefer the praise of God to the praise of men ? Is he instructed to esteem all things truly valuable, as they are really useful ; and that as he is holy, he is indeed happy ?

That the "soul's health" is not the chief object of general education, is sufficiently obvious to every candid observer. Were this the

case, the Bible, in its original, as well as in its translations, would become the basis of instruction; and all other knowledge would be imparted with reference to it. The Greek and Roman Classics would serve as striking illustrations of its great truths, and the veneration now excited for mere learning, would receive its proper level from a comparison with this standard of intellectual and moral perfection. The different branches of human knowledge would, thus subordinated, be taught with the view of forming those paramount and solid excellencies of character, which would prepare the man for future usefulness, and gird up the loins of his mind for the conscientious discharge of every relative obligation. Then not the excitements of the imagination, but the cultivation of the judgment would be a main object proposed ; and man, immortal man, as related to God and his neighbour, would be placed before the youthful mind, as he is represented in history sacred and profane, rather than as he is misrepresented in the fictions of Poets, and the reveries of Philosophers : and it would be systematically shown, that all the hypotheses of the schools, and the figments and schemes of unchristian moralists and statesmen for the amelioration of their species, are mere childish folly, and weak delusion, and empty pretence, when compared with those three simple formularies, which are proposed as the ground-work of every Christian's

education, "The Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer," as exhibited in the one authentic record of immutable truth ; and that the one plain and simple doctrine of Christ crucified, has done more to bless our species, has shed abroad more wisdom, more truth, more peace, more blessing, than all the collective principles and efforts of heathen learning and heathen power. Then human wisdom, and human prudence, the two fairest daughters of nature, would become the willing hand-maids of grace. Then all that is lovely in personal character, all that is excellent in relative life, and every advance that man can make in domestic, social, civil, political, national, and international happiness, as well as the universal happiness of his species, would be seen intimately connected with the spread of the three simple Catechetical formularies of his childhood. Then it would be found that the feeble, incomplete, hasty, half-measured, partial and often contradictory enactments of human legislatures ; and the inconsistencies and perplexities which attend the administration of every merely human code, would be rectified as men regarded the exquisitely simple requisitions of the divine law ; which in its first statute, that enjoining the duty of man to man, promises a happy and peaceful life to every one who, in the fear of God, discharges the whole round of his relative duties, whether superior or inferior,

which it illustrates by, and bottoms on that first relation in which every man is found—his relation as a Child to his Parents—which in its second statute secures the *person* of man, by forbidding the entertainment of any one feeling of hatred in the mind, which, if permitted to issue in act, might deprive that person of life, or interrupt its well-being—which in its third statute provides for the domestic happiness of man in his *family*, and forbids the prurience of those carnal passions, which would most effectually interrupt the peace of the family, in snapping asunder the conjugal bond by the abduction of an adulterous Parent—which in its fourth statute secures the *property* of man, by forbidding every straggling desire that might issue in depriving his fellow-man of his property by stealth : stealth being the utmost expression of covetousness that man can exercise against the property of his neighbour, as murder is the most intense expression of hatred against his person—which in its fifth statute provides for the *reputation* of man, by forbidding all flattery as well as detraction, and every intimation inconsistent with the strictest truth—and which in its sixth and last provision for the moral welfare of mankind, applies itself to the fountain of evil, and forbids the embryo desire of what belongs to our neighbour in our hearts.

What is all human legislation when compared with this exquisitely brief but finished table of

statute law? It is usual to admire the code of Napoleon for its intelligible and lucid arrangement; but here is a code, which, whether for brevity or comprehension, which for exquisite arrangement and intelligible precision, exceeds any known effort of legislation on earth. We commend the study of Political Economy, but what are all the projects of mere Political Economy compared with this? a Moral Economy which, originating in the charities of domestic life, gradually expands those charities through the whole circle of human relations, and knows no termination till it has mixed with all the sympathies and wants of suffering and sinful man. It is a Universal Economy, which being grounded on the four first fundamental statutes, man's duty to God, is engaged in promoting the interests and advancing the happiness of his creatures, not only as those interests and that happiness are connected with time, but as they are connected with eternity also. And viewed through the Gospel, what an inestimable advantage has this over every human code? This does not merely enact what is "holy, just and good," it provides ability to perform also: it does not merely demand, it provides compliance with its own demands. The Everlasting Gospel, contained in the Articles of our Creed, provides a power to perform the Law, from the constraining love of Christ to the soul; and prayer is annexed for grace, from the fountain of grace.

by which every needful help is supplied, to enable us to do that "which by nature we cannot do." And now let the warmest benevolence, the most matured judgment, and the most enraptured imagination, apply themselves to pourtray a finished state of human society ; let a Republic, a Utopia, or any other political device, exhibit the best and most perfect designs of Plato or More, or of the most gifted philanthropist, to ameliorate the condition of their species, yet how pitifully do they fail ? and for this plain reason, because "the soul's health" is not the leading object of their systems. Whereas Christianity, by uniting man to God by the bonds of faith, animates him to obedience by the constraining influence of love. It gives a simple law which respects the regulation of the inmost thought of the soul; it supplies a desire and an ability to observe this law, and it opens a channel of divine communion between the soul and its God, which in return for every ascending confession of defect, and humble petition for supply, readily conveys infinitely more than the lips of man can express, or the soul of man can desire.

Were "the soul's health," then ever to become the object of education ; according to this great Baptismal injunction, it is evident that our present mode of general instruction must receive a materially new character. Then ideas would not be imparted for the sake of teaching lan-

guage, but language would be taught for the sake of imparting ideas. Then false sentiments would be rectified with more assiduity than false grammar is corrected. Then this leading axiom of morals that—**MEN ARE AS THEIR PRINCIPLES**,—would pervade and animate the whole circle of relative life, from the Legislature to the lowest subject of its enactments. Then gifts would be subordinated to graces, what is useful would be preferred to what is garish, what is pious to what is accomplished. Then a Tutor would find the measure of his excellencies not in the extent of mere knowledge, but in the ardour of that piety, which gives to competent knowledge its most spiritual effect; and the ability of a Schoolmaster would be estimated by his skill in ascertaining individual character, in adapting his instruction to the peculiar genius and talent of each scholar, and in improving the natural powers and attainments of each to the greatest good of men, and the highest glory of God.¹

¹ Locke, in “Some thoughts concerning education,” expresses himself strongly on this subject. “Reading, and Writing, and Learning, I allow to be necessary, but yet not the chief business. I imagine you would think him a very foolish fellow, that should not value a virtuous, or a wise man, infinitely before a great Scholar. Not but that I think Learning a great help to both in well disposed minds; but yet it must be confessed also, that in others not so disposed, it helps them only to be the more foolish, or worse men. I say this, that when you consider of the breeding of your Son, and are

It is gratifying to the spirit groaning under the errors and miseries of our present relaxed condition of society, to contemplate that ameliorated state of human existence to which education, directed with this one simple aim "the soul's health," must necessarily elevate our country ; and in that elevation become a blessing to mankind. Whence do all our corruptions that are so loudly and feelingly lamented arise ? Simply from defect of principle ; and what is real principle but the fear of God ? that concern for eternal things which is associated with the "health of the soul." Interest men steadily for the health of their own souls, and you have a principle in action which must improve every earthly occasion and purpose to the advancement of those higher interests which affect themselves as well as the whole species to which they belong. Then indeed, not in the fictions of poets, but in the clear prediction of prophecy, in the certain progress of the design

looking out for a Schoolmaster, or a Tutor, you would not have (as is usual) Latin and Logic only in your thoughts. Learning must be had, but in *the second place*, as subservient only to greater qualities. Seek out somebody, that may know how discreetly to frame his manners. Place him in hands, where you may, as much as possible secure his innocence, cherish and nurse up the good, and gently correct, and weed out any bad inclinations, and settle in him good habits. This is the main point, and this being provided for, Learning may be had into the bargain, and that, as I think, at a very easy rate, by methods that may be thought on." pp. 268—9.

of Almighty mercy, and in the infallible verity of the divine promise, a more perfect dispensation of human society would arise. And with this general complexion of improvement all our public and private Institutions would receive a corresponding character. Then there would be no question about Reform in the Legislature or in the Church, it would as certainly take place from the reformation of private principle, as the best wheat sown in the earth produces a crop of the same excellence as its seed. Then every measure of Government, as it was dictated by the love of the people, would meet with the grateful acceptance of those for whom it was designed. Then the laws of a country must necessarily be simplified, for they would be few and simple. Its criminal code would not be written in blood, for where the "soul's health" is duly estimated, human life is ever precious. The interference of Law in many of the ordinary transactions of life would cease to be intrusive and onerous; and the tyranny of Selfishness and Cunning would not force the letter beyond its evident design. The administration of the laws would be unfettered by questionable precedents, and unembarrassed by litigation and chicane, and Justice and Equity might occupy the same Bench. Then Trade would be conducted on the most liberal as well as the most equitable principles; it would then appear how strikingly selfishness defeats itself by restricting the free

barter of the products of nature and art by exclusive imposts and forbidding duties ; and that the more unobstructed the interchange might be of those superfluities with which a bounteous Providence has enriched each respective country, the greater the abundance both of national and universal blessings. And this reign of liberal commerce once established, wars of national aggrandisement would cease ; discoveries for mere increase of territory would be no more, and the invasion of civilized or uncivilized man to deprive him of freedom of person or property, would yield to the blessed experience that Justice is preferable to Force, Honesty to Fraud, Liberality to Exclusion, and the kind confidence of peace to the distrustful suspicions of war. Nor would rapacity and cruelty and the sacrifice both of the natural and spiritual interests of men to mere gain be the reproach of commercial enterprise ; but " the soul's health " being associated with it, it would be found that the improving interests of the body were proportioned to the improving interests of the soul. Then Agriculture would be freed from the charge of oppression and unfeeling selfishness in the employer, and from ignorance and improvidence in the employed. The light of truth would then break in upon the most inaccessible retirement of rustic life, and convince its occupant that justice makes no man poor, that liberality secures industry, fidelity, and honesty, and that the best

charity consists in rendering the poor independent of it.¹ The Farmer would then learn both the responsibility and the privilege of the influence with which his station in society invests him. Like the family of a Patriarch, the dependents of his house would share the blessings of his abundance ; and every field, the cultivation of which too frequently groans under the curses of hopeless pauperism, would then smile in truly blessed fertility, under the watering of those prayers which would as naturally follow the share, as the share follows the animal that draws it. The unnatural anomaly of legalized compulsory charity would then cease ; industry by receiving its best wages, independence, would supersede the necessity of legislative interference between men ; and charity, free as the operations of that Spirit which imparted this crowning grace to the soul, being left to the unfettered play of its own diffusiveness would assuage every genuine woe, and supply every real want. The impostor would be abashed, the indolent stimulated, the indifferent interested, the careless would be roused to attention, and the patience of the real sufferer from below, meeting the ready hand of active benevolence from above, the whole mass of human suffering would be alleviated and

¹ It was a saying of the first Earl of Orrery, " That the greatest charity consisted in keeping people from needing it."

assuaged. But unless our moral reformation were conducted with a prevailing and paramount regard "to the soul's health ;" though Reform took place through every varied gradation of rank and station among us, from the Legislature to the lowest night-cellar in our crowded metropolis, the present abode of designing worthlessness, and meditative crime,—the social chord though strung to the most exquisite pitch of moral harmony would quickly lose its tension, and having no stay to maintain it, would speedily revert to its wonted state of discord and disorder. A well-principled people are alone fit for Reform ; let the people once be prepared to receive it, and in the necessary process of human circumstance it must infallibly establish itself. But how are the people to be brought to this state ? By listening to that Church to which they profess to belong : by reforming the education of all ranks, and **CHIEFLY PROVIDING** that all "may learn all things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his SOUL'S HEALTH."

I must entreat you, My Dear Friend, to pardon the detention which this rapid survey of society, improved by a prevailing regard in the Sponsor to educate his charge in what may tend to his "soul's health," has produced : the scene is too lovely not to be dwelt upon with complacency, and I am unwilling that the Sponsor should lose any stimulant which may en-

courage him to the earnest discharge of his duties.

The next clause addressed by the Church to the Sponsors is, "and that this child may be virtuously brought up to lead a godly and a Christian life." Not merely a moral life, but "a godly and a Christian life." In this and in this alone can he "be virtuously brought up." Mere moral virtue is loose in its principle, vacillating as human habit, and arbitrary as human caprice in its exercise, and short and defective in its end. Christian virtue, is grace wrought into the habit, the fruit of the Spirit springing out of a lively faith in the merits and death of our crucified Mediator, and is the very soul of "a godly and a Christian life." No Christian virtue, that is, no gracious habit can flow from the Law, or from a mere legal education, in which I conceive the mistake that dwarfs our present Christian growth to originate, and consequently it cannot issue in "a godly and a Christian life." But once associate this education, or "bringing up," with the promise of the Gospel, once let the Child see that he is a child of adoption, that God is again his reconciled Father in Christ Jesus, and you have "a godly life" emanating from godly principles, and maintained by "a godly" support: and once let him feel that he is indebted to the blood and merits of his crucified Saviour for every mercy he enjoys, and that it is his privilege as well as

his duty that men should glorify Christ in him ; and that an unfailing supply of his Spirit shall be granted to maintain this divine life in his soul, to his "diligent" and persevering prayer ; and you have "a Christian life" also—a life of which Christ is the beginning, the middle, and the end ; of which the example of Christ is the unfailing rule, faith in Christ the ever-flowing spring, and the Spirit of Christ the ever-animating support. This is the Christian man of virtue ; the man alone who can live "a godly and a Christian life :" never yet did a human soul, formed upon the mere precepts of the Law, attain this state of perfection ; it is to the vitally-operating promise of the Gospel alone to which the praise of such a character is due.

The address concludes, by recommending the Sponsors, for the better performance of their duty, to "remember always, that Baptism doth represent unto us our profession, which is" to imitate the life and graces of our Redeemer,— "to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto him ; that as he died and rose again for us, so should we who are baptised die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness." These two expressions comprise the whole of our sanctification,—the mortification of sin ; and, as our old divines term it, vivification to holiness : and this will be the work of the baptised believer "unto his life's end ;" even till the graces of time are consummated in

the glories of eternity : for as Christian men, our whole lives must be spent in “ continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and in daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living.” Here the Christian course is described, as a continual contest with sin, and a daily progress in holiness, even to the last gasp of life. This is real and vital and bible-proof Christianity : the Child thus qualified is a child of grace, holy and humble ; while every other child is merely moral, and therefore worldly and unhumbled, for he can attain nothing more than a proud and meagre morality.

And here, my Dear Friend, permit me to ask, on what other consideration could a Christian man become responsible for the Christian education of his charge ? He is too well acquainted with his own infirmity, and that of the Child committed to his care, to advance one step in this spiritual work without the encouragement of the promise, and the aid of the Holy Spirit. Unless in a judgment of faith and charity this Child is a “ member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven,” unless he is “ a lively member ” of the Church, unless he is really regenerated by the Holy Spirit, received “ as God’s ” own child by adoption, and incorporated into the holy Church ; unless in answer to the faithful prayers of himself, the Parents, and the Church, “ the Holy Ghost ” is “ sanctifying ” him as one of “ the

elect people of God," and being one so truly blessed, he shall "ever remain in the number of" his "faithful and elect children,"—with what hope of success could a Christian man accept the office of a Sponsor? For a man who sees nothing more in Baptism than the mere ceremony, it is consistent enough to undertake the promise without any subsequent endeavour to execute it; as he never understood the vows, so neither had he any intention to discharge the obligations of them; but for a Christian man to engage in this office knowingly and intelligently, for such an one to undertake to train up a soul for glory, to endue it with spiritual qualities, and to make it "conformable to the image of the Son of God," without believing that it was the good pleasure of God to fulfil his promise in sanctifying that soul as one of his own elect—would surely be the height of rashness and presumption.

How different the process of the Sponsor's engagements when faith in the promise is ever animating him to discharge them? Grounded on faith, he proceeds in hope. "Our Lord Jesus Christ has promised in his Gospel, to grant all those things that" he has "prayed for; which promise," the Church assures him, "he for his part will most surely keep and perform." "Wherefore," he is "persuaded of the goodwill of" his "Heavenly Father towards" the Infant of his care, "declared by his Son Jesus

Christ ; " he nothing doubts " that he favourably allows this CHARITABLE WORK of his, in bringing this Infant to his holy Baptism." He doubts not but earnestly believes that Christ has likewise favourably received this present infant as he did those of old ; and he is thus encouraged hopefully and perseveringly to use all the prescribed means that a child so distinguished, should " receive the fulness of " the " grace " of God, " and ever remain in the number of his faithful and elect children."

And now, my Dear Friend, to this reasoning add the moral certainty, that it is only the Sponsor who acts upon this statement, that will ever be found to perform his engagements ; and for this plain reason, because he only can form a proper estimate of the privileges of Baptism. A negligent Sponsor is an unbelieving Sponsor ; for no man will be anxious to secure advantages, which he does not believe that a promise is given to convey. It is the man that believes the promise, who can alone expect any advantages from it, and it is his vigilance and his care alone that will be concerned to secure them.

Thus encouraged, let not the faithful Sponsor flinch from his charitable undertaking. Let him rally his weak faith by recurring to the promises in favour of the children of the Church. Let him say " should such a man as I flee ? "¹

¹ Neh. vi. 11.

in the hour of difficulty is it for me to turn my back ? " O Lord what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies ? " ¹ Let him rather gird up his loins to the work, stand in the gap, and make up the breach, remembering that " it is not the will of " his " Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." ²

¹ Josh. vii. 8.

² Matt. xviii. 14.

LETTER IV.

THE INFANT.

THE Infant baptised can justly expect the benefits of Baptism in no other way than by faith in the promise. He is taught, that when his name was given him at his Baptism by his Sponsors, he was as a professed Christian admitted into all the privileges of that high character, that he was then “made a member of Christ,” incorporated into his body the Church, by faith expressed for him by his Sponsors, thence “the child of God” by adoption and grace; and thence “an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven”—if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. He is then taught to walk worthy of his calling as a “Child of God,” to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, to believe the Articles of the Christian faith, and to keep and walk in God’s holy will and commandments all the days of his life. And he “heartily” thanks his “Heavenly Father that he has called” him “to this state of salvation through Jesus Christ” his “Saviour,” and it is his prayer to “God, to give” him “his grace that” he “may continue in” this state to which he has been thus graciously called, “unto his life’s end.” He is then taught “to believe in God the Father who hath

made" him "and all the world; in God the Son who hath redeemed" him "and all mankind;" and "in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth" him, "and all the elect people of God." Not who *may* sanctify or *shall* sanctify, or whose office it is to sanctify, but is then presently engaged in sanctifying him, together with "all the elect people of God;" of which it is strongly implied that he is one, since all who are sanctified are "God's elect." He is then taught the particulars of the will of God which constitute the rule of his obedience, in the ten commandments, of which an epitome is given in the two great branches of his duty. Then the duty and necessity of prayer are insisted on: and the "Instruction" concludes with an explanation of the Sacraments, which, as means of grace, are, under the blessing of the Spirit, to nourish and confirm his graces.

Here the construction and form, as well as the subject matter of the Catechism, go to instruct the Child, that he is "a member of Christ," &c: that God has called him into a state of salvation by grace through Jesus Christ his Saviour; and that the Holy Ghost is even then sanctifying him, together with all the elect people of God. And is not all this in perfect consistency with the prayers and praises of his Baptism which has preceded, and the prayers of the Bishop at Confirmation, which succeeds his Catechetical Instruction? In the former we

say, “grant that this child now to be baptized therein, may receive the fulness of thy grace, and ever remain in the number of thy faithful and elect children :” and we “yield hearty thanks” to our “most merciful Father, that it hath pleased” him “to regenerate this infant with” his “holy Spirit, to receive him for” his “own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into” his “holy Church.” And in the latter, the child having “renewed the solemn promise and vow made in” his “name at” his “baptism ;” the Bishop opens his prayer with an acknowledgment of the regeneration and justification of the child, “Almighty and ever-living God who hast vouchsafed to regenerate these thy servants by water and the Holy Ghost, and hast given unto them forgiveness of all their sins,” &c. And is not this in perfect accordance with the Scriptures ? on what ground does St. Paul call upon the Romans for sanctification ? “I beseech you, therefore, brethren, *by the mercies of God*, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,” &c : the duties of the five last chapters of the epistle, are built on the mercies of the eleven first ; and the important illative “therefore” is the cement which binds the superstructure of duties and graces to the foundation of “mercies.” On what ground does he call upon the Colossians to exercise graces or to discharge relative duties, but as “risen with Christ,” and as “the elect of God ? ”

And have we not ample reason to take this encouraging view of the subject, both from the letter of our formularies, so perfectly according with that of Scripture, and the ill success which has hitherto attended our legal mode of enforcing Catechetical Instruction? Let us no longer educate our children in the persuasion that they have an ability to do good "which by nature" they "cannot have." Let us no longer, when a child is in fault, exact a promise from him, made in the confidence of his own natural strength, that he will not repeat it. Let us be consistent, and no longer teach the child, that he has "no power of himself to help himself," and yet constantly make demands upon the exercise of a strength, as though it were his own, which we know ourselves, and also teach him, that he has not. Let us rather encourage him to faith and good works, by showing him that he is under a covenant of grace; that what his own "ungodly" nature, without any strength to good, cannot do, Jesus Christ has done, and will do, both *for* him and *in* him: that what the Law demands *of* him, Christ has done *for* him, both in his life and death; and that what the Law demands *in* him, Christ has engaged to impart by his Spirit; that his constant prayer must be "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me;"¹ that his coldness in

¹. Psalm li. 10.

prayer, his trifling and his indisposition in this duty are proofs of his fallen nature, and of the necessity of grace ; that all his childish faults, his lying, his idleness, his disobedience, his thoughtlessness and the like, are sins against a holy God ; that this God is now his kind Father in Jesus Christ ; whose love to him demands a willing obedience, a devoted heart, and the dedication of body and soul to his service ; that a sense of his sinfulness should bring him low on his knees in constant confession and sorrow for his sins ; while God as a reconciled Father in Christ Jesus, is ever ready to receive his confessions, to pardon his sins, and to renew him in holiness ; that the grace which has adopted him, will assuredly help him ; that in all his trials and difficulties he must go to God, and never cease to call upon him " by diligent prayer." It is confessed by many a Parent with a bitter sense of disappointment that our present mode of education is unsuccessful ; let us change our principle for that of the Baptismal Service, and its corresponding formularies ; let us trust to the promise, draw our resources from grace and not from nature, educate our children as children of adoption, and hope that God will reward our faith with his blessing.

But it may here be said, would you have us teach our children the doctrine of particular election, as a principle of action stirring them up to a holy life ? I answer, that I would have

it taught as our Church teaches it, not in a dry, scholastic, and angry manner, as it is too frequently taught in the pages of disputatious controversialists ; but with all the blessed sense of privilege, and all the encouraging accompaniments with which it is taught in the three formularies of our Church which relate to Baptism.

I conceive then, that the Sponsor is, according to those formularies entitled thus to address his charge. " My Dear Child ; There can be no doubt, I think, in your mind, that you are a sinner against God ; the Bible teaches you this, and your daily experience teaches you the same. You know that you are indebted to him for all things ; he made you, he preserves you, he has redeemed you ; and what returns do you make to him for all this kindness ? Do you pray to him ? you know what a trouble it is to you to engage in prayer, and how thoughtlessly and coldly you perform this duty. You should fear, respect, and reverence him ; but in your prayers how little reverence do you show for him ; how carelessly and inattentively do you conduct yourself ! You should love him " with all " your " heart, mind, soul, and strength ; " now if you love him with all your heart, you will prefer him to every person and every thing ; but do you not love your Parents better than God, and do you not love many foolish trifles more than you love him ? And as to loving your neighbour as well as yourself, you know how unwilling you

are to give to another, even to your own friends, any part of that which you have set your heart upon. Now all this is sin, for it is not doing what God's holy law commands you to do ; and it all springs from an evil heart of unbelief in the living God ; with which evil heart you came into the world, and which your Parents as well as yourself derived from the fall of our common Parent Adam. Thus being a sinner by nature you are a child of wrath, for you are "not able to do these things of" yourself, "nor to walk in the commandments of God," nor "to serve him."

" Think then in what a dreadful state you were born ; "by nature" you are a "child of wrath," and being a child of wrath, your just portion is everlasting punishment in hell. But see what mercy God has shown you ; for through his mercy in giving his only Son for you, you are no longer a child of wrath, but a child of grace : you are again admitted as the child of God by adoption ; for God in his holy word has given us "exceeding great and precious promises,"¹ which he has adapted to us in our different relations and conditions as fallen sinners. Children have promises made to them, and Parents have promises made to them ; now God has greatly encouraged Christian Parents to devote their children to him, and to bring them up to love and

¹ 2. Pet. i. 4.

to fear him. And all these promises are summed up in that gracious act of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he reproved those who would have kept little children from him as they brought them to him for a blessing ; and when he said, “ Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid’ them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.” When you were an Infant your Parents chose me as your God-father, your spiritual Parent to present you to the Church for Baptism ; in this office of kindness to you I willingly engaged : and because the Church requires of all “ persons to be baptised, repentance whereby they forsake sin, and faith whereby they stedfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that Sacrament ; ” and as you were then an Infant, and “ by reason of your ” then “ tender age you could not perform them,”—“ I promised them both ” for you before the Church as your “ Surety,” which promise when you come of age you yourself are bound to perform.”

“ And now you are arrived at sufficient age to understand these things, let me remind you first of the engagements which I have undertaken for you. I promised first, that you “ should renounce ” the great enemy of God, “ the devil, and all his works,” for he was a liar and “ a murderer from the beginning ; ”¹ and not only

¹ John viii. 44.

the devil, but “this wicked world,” which is indeed a world lying in wickedness with all its pomps, and all its vanity, which encourage you to self-exaltation and self-display: and that you should renounce “all the sinful lusts of the flesh,” which you so frequently feel the power of, and which are so constantly stirring you up to perform your own desires in preference to the will of God. The second promise I made for you was, “that you should believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith;” which are the principles of your conduct, and without which it is impossible that you can be either holy or happy. The last promise I made for you was, “that you should keep God’s holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of your life.” You see then how large and important the engagements are which I have undertaken for you, so large and important that I could not have thought of undertaking them but on the security of a divine promise: but I saw you destitute and helpless, and being “affectionately desirous of you,” and believing that God would favorably allow the “charitable work” of mine in bringing you to his holy baptism, weighty as the charge was, since it was all for your benefit, I could not but willingly engage to perform it.

“ You see then how much is required of you now you are of sufficient age to understand and to

discharge your Baptismal obligations ; I ask you now to make good my promises to the Church ; the Church expects it both of me and of you, and God forbid that we should disappoint her reasonable expectations.

“ Be not discouraged at the difficulty of your undertaking : believe only the rich promises of God, and you shall not fail. It is true, you “ are notable to do these things of yourself ; ” you cannot in any strength of your own renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil ; you have no ability in either your mind or heart to believe one of these Articles of your faith ; nor can you “ walk in the commandments of God, and serve him without his special grace : ” but do not forget, that this grace God is ever ready to give you, and that he loves you “ at all times to call ” on him “ for ” it “ by diligent prayer ; ” and as you are now a child of his adoption, you are at all times acceptable to him, and his ear is ever open to hear you. You have much to encourage you ; for remember what blessed privileges you were admitted to at your Baptism ; you were first “ made a member of Christ : ” now I expect the evidences that you are as truly incorporated into, or become a member of Christ’s spiritual body, as that my arm or my leg are a part of this my natural body ; and these evidences are, that you live in Jesus Christ by the exercise of a lively faith, and that he lives in you by the renewing, sanctifying, and consoling influence

of his Spirit. The life, therefore, which I am desirous of seeing you live in the body, is a spiritual life, which you can only live by " faith of the Son of God."¹ Let it encourage you to bring all your wants to a throne of grace, when you remember that Jesus Christ sits as the Head of his body the Church, of which I trust you are a lively member, to supply all your wants, and to give you grace sufficient for every time of need.

" Let me also encourage you by reminding you that as you were at your Baptism " made a member of Christ," you were, in virtue of this connexion with Jesus Christ, then made " the child of God " also. As God is " his Father " so he is now your Father, not by nature but by adoption and grace. You know, that, as you are a sinner, you can claim nothing of God ; all that you have from him therefore is in the way of mercy. If I meet a poor ragged houseless starving child in the street, he cannot claim one farthing from my pocket as his right ; much less to be taken into my house : but if I extend my pity still further than this ; if I take him home to my house, make him one of my family, clothe him at my own expense, seat him at the same table with myself, and introduce him to my friends as my own child, to whom I purpose to leave my property when I die ; this is freely and graciously to adopt him as my own child. It is an act of mere pity, of free grace,

¹ Gal. ii. 20.

nothing moving me to this act of benevolence but my own will and pleasure. It is thus, that, in virtue of your being a member of Christ through faith, you become a child of God by adoption : you are one of his family, you are of the household of God, not a “servant but a Son,”¹ and therefore entitled to see your Father’s face, to enjoy what his house affords, to tell him all your wants, to pour all your complaints into his bosom, to find access into his presence at all times by prayer, and to enjoy a constant sense of his kindness and love ; and this sense of a Father’s kindness and love you will find the grand preservative from sin.

“ And being thus God’s adopted child, let the third privilege of Baptism encourage you to go “on your way rejoicing ;” for being a child of God, you are “an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven ;” if a child then an heir, an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ. Enjoying the privilege of a child, heaven is given you as your everlasting inheritance. It is the free purchase of the blood of Christ, graciously and gratuitously bestowed upon you. You stand before God in the merits of Christ Jesus ; he regards you as a portion of his Son, a member of his very body ; and the love wherewith he loves him he loves you also, for “so are we in the sight of God as is the very Son of God himself.”²

¹ Gal. iv. 7.

² Hooker.

“ ‘ Do you not think,’ ” then, since all these things are so evidently for your advantage, “ that you are bound to believe and to do as ” we “ have promised for you ? ” And should you not say “ yes ” indeed I do think so ; and it is my firm intention if God help me with his grace to believe and to do as you have promised for me ; and I heartily thank our heavenly Father that he hath thus called me from my natural state of sin and condemnation, to this state of salvation of free mercy and mere grace through the channel of all his mercies Jesus Christ our Saviour : and it shall be my constant prayer to God to give me his grace, that I may continue in this same state of salvation by grace, to the very end of my life, when the grace which he has bestowed on me on earth shall be perfected in the glory of heaven ?

“ You do well to say “ unto my life’s end,” for it is yours to discharge Baptismal vows, and to enjoy Baptismal privileges to the very last gasp of your mortal life ; and of this the Church will not fail to remind you. Whenever you are ill, you will be told of “ the profession which you made unto God in your Baptism ; ” and at your Confirmation, the Bishop will make the most pointed appeal to your conscience, whether you are willing to confirm in your own person the vows and promises of your Baptism.

“ Let me conclude then, by affectionately reminding you that a season is approaching when

you are to "be brought to the Bishop to be confirmed by him;" this "care" is committed to me; and our minister will expect me to see that you are prepared for that solemn occasion. The Bishop will then ask you the questions I have just now put to you; demanding of you whether you do there in the presence of God, and the whole "congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow that was made in your name at your Baptism;" and on your answering "I do," as I trust you will through grace be enabled to do with all your heart, he will assume that "God" has "vouchsafed to regenerate you by water and the Holy Ghost," and has "given" to you "forgiveness of all" your "sins;" and his prayer will be that God would "strengthen" you "with the Holy Ghost the Comforter, daily increase" in you "his manifold gifts of grace," and that you "may continue" his "for ever." You see then what the Church and its ministers expect from us, that I should present you a truly gracious soul at your Confirmation. It is my heart's desire not to disappoint them. I would watch over your growing years with the most affectionate solicitude, trusting to those kind promises for success, on which alone I undertook the interesting office of your Godfather; and by which I trust you are indeed a "child of God," and that the Holy Ghost is even now "sanctifying" you with "all the elect people of God." And it is my hearty

prayer, that you may constantly avail yourself of all the means of grace which secure this happy state, so that you "may receive the fulness of grace, and ever remain in the number of" the "faithful and elect children of God." "

Did every Godfather thus address his charge, habitually and perseveringly, from the first apprehension of his opening faculties, to the day of his Confirmation, would not the Christian world present an improved appearance? and might we not hope, that God would smile on such endeavours to honor the most blessed truths of his word, his mercy and his love, as they were legitimately and practically brought into action to form a soul in holiness, on the indisputable warrant of his promise?

But I am well aware, My Dear Friend, that such is the opposition of all our hearts by nature to this great leading doctrine of the grace of God, that it will be necessary to heap proof upon proof before we can be persuaded to admit the doctrine of election as a motive of Christian action, especially to the young. I have already shown, I trust, that this is the principle of holiness approved by the Baptismal Service, the Catechism and the Service of Confirmation; I must again appeal to our Church in the second Catechism, or longer and more expanded detail of doctrine and practice which she has provided for her more adult catechumen. This is King Edward the Sixth's Catechism,

an elaborate and authorised work of our Reformers, and far too little known among us.

This Catechism enjoins “ all School-masters —that ye truly and diligently teach this Catechism in your schools, immediately after the other brief Catechism which we have already set forth,” and does not shrink from animating the Scholar to holy exertions by the consideration that “ as many as do truly fear, honour, and call upon God, wholly applying their mind to holy and godly living, “ belong to the commonwealth ” of God’s elect.

“ *Master.*—Now remaineth that thou speak of the holy church ; whereof I would very fain hear thy opinion.

“ *Scholar.*—I will rehearse that in few words shortly, which the holy Scriptures set out at large and plentifully. Afore that the Lord God had made the heaven and earth; he determined to have for himself a most beautiful kingdom and holy commonwealth. The Apostles and the ancient Fathers, that wrote in Greek, called it *Εκκλησία*, in English a congregation or assembly : into the which he hath admitted an infinite number of men, that should all be subject to one king, as their sovereign and only one head ; him we call Christ; which is as much to say, as Anointed.—To the furnishing of this commonwealth belong all they as many as do truly fear, honour, and call upon God, wholly applying their mind to holy and godly living : and

all those that, putting all their hope and trust in him, do assuredly look for the bliss of everlasting life. But as many, as are in this faith stedfast, were fore-chosen, predestinated, and appointed out to everlasting life, before the world was made. Witness hereof, they have within in their hearts the Spirit of Christ, the author, earnest, and infallible pledge of their faith. Which faith only is able to perceive the mysteries of God: only bringeth peace unto the heart: only taketh hold on the righteousness that is in Christ Jesus.

“ *Master*.—Doth then the Spirit alone, and faith (sleep we never so soundly, or stand we never so reckless and slothful,) so work all things for us, as without any help of our own to carry us idle up to heaven?

“ *Scholar*.—I use, Master, as you have taught me, to make a difference between the *cause* and the *effects*. The first, principal, and most perfect cause of our justifying and salvation, is the goodness and love of God: whereby he chose us for his, before he made the world. After that, God granteth us to be called by the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; when the Spirit of the Lord is poured into us: by whose guiding and governance we be led to settle our trust in God, and hope for the performance of all his promises. With this choice is joined, as companion, the mortifying of the old man; that is, of our affection and lust.

"From the same Spirit also cometh our sanctification, the love of God and of our neighbour, justice, and uprightness of life: finally, to say all in sum, whatsoever is in us, or may be done of us, pure, honest, true, and good: that altogether springeth out of this most pleasant root, from this most plentiful fountain, the goodness, love, choice, and unchangeable purpose of God. He is the *cause*, the rest are the *fruits and effects*," &c.¹

Here the Scholar is plainly taught, as the child is in our Catechism, that holiness is by grace and not by nature: "it springs from this most pleasant fountain, the goodness, love, choice, and unchangeable purpose of God." A holy life is the consequence, "the rest are the fruits and effects." How much more encouraging then is it to a poor creature, the victim of all the corruptions and infirmities of a fallen nature, to lead him to "this most pleasant root, and most plentiful fountain" of grace, than to throw him on the delusive resources of his own perverted will, and the incapacity of his own depraved heart.

And may we not add to this persuasive precept and practice of our Church, the yet more conclusive argument of fact. Are there not many instances on record, and are they wanting in the living experience of the present day, of

¹ Fathers of the English Church, vol. ii. pp. 362—364.

children into whose hearts the Spirit of God has wrought a lively feeling of the blessedness of these doctrines ? whose religion, as Hooker calls it, is a “feelingly-known” religion : and who though they can give no correct analysis of the same, are exhibiting a lively evidence of the truth of these doctrines of grace in their daily walk and conversation ? The grace of God is really operating in them a change of heart. If a child on retiring to rest at night, sheds a tear over the sins committed during the day, and prays for pardon of that God who “seeth” that tear “in secret ;” if, when driven to distress under the frown of his Parent, he says “Let me kneel down and pray to God for pardon and strength to sin no more,” acknowledging God as his refuge ; if the Bible and the things of the Bible are dear to him ; if he denies himself for the good of others ; and if amidst his childish folly and trifling there is a prevailing disposition to regard the concerns of his immortal soul,—could we justly withhold from such a child, the character which the Scripture ascribes to the young Abijah, that there was “found in him some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel ? ”¹ Shall we not, in a judgment of charity, hope that the Holy Ghost “sanctifieth,” or is sanctifying that child, and that he is therefore one of “the elect children of God ? ” I do hope that such

¹ 1 Kings xiv. 13.

instances are not only on record, but that some domestic circles contain these cheering evidences of effectual grace in the youthful mind in this our day; and that Parents are yet to be found, who hail these rising graces as germs of future blessings, both to themselves, their children and the Church of Christ.

And here, suffer me, before I conclude this part of the subject, to draw the very necessary distinction between experience of the blessedness of a doctrine, and the power to analyse that experience. The one is the work of the heart, the other of the head; the one is the exercise of the affections, the other of the understanding: the child can feel the love of God and the fear of God, when he may not be able to analyse those feelings, or correctly to describe them. The Scriptures address themselves not to an understanding head but to an "understanding heart":¹ their blessed truths are not given so much to be reasoned on, as to be felt; not so much to be canvassed by the understanding, as to be applied by the heart. A hungry beggar does not reason about the ingredients of the food presented to him: it is wholesome, it is suitable, it is presented by a friend, it is just the supply which his wants demand. And while learned disputants are controverting the truth of a doctrine, and subjecting it to the

¹ Prov. viii. 5.

severest analysis of critical acumen, the child may without controversy be feeling the blessedness of that very doctrine in his holy experience, which they are questioning, and possess that best evidence of its truth “the witness in himself,”¹ which all the mass of external and internal evidence accumulated in unnumbered folios, may be unequal to convey. The one is the ratiocination of man, the other is the impress of the Spirit; the one may be the accurate deduction of intellect, the other is the exquisite essence brought home in power to the heart, and wrought out in all the lively efficacy of experimental blessedness. Children taught as above, have been known experimentally to apply the doctrine of the Trinity in their prayers.² They have addressed God the Father as

¹ 1 John v. 10.

² A child may be taught the God with whom he has to do, if the practical purposes for which that God is revealed, are explained to him in the three Unities.

The *first Unity* is that of the three Persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, existing in the Godhead.

The *Father* is the fountain of Deity—abstract and essential perfection—being, wisdom, justice, holiness, truth, power, mercy, love, infinity, &c. The child has seen a holy man, and a powerful man, but he never saw power or holiness; he has seen them as qualities, but he never saw them in essence; now God the Father is all this in essence. And this “no man hath seen, nor can see,” 1 Timothy vi. 18.

The *Son* is the *EXPRESSION* of Deity, for “no man hath seen God the Father at any time,” John i. 18. neither can he see or comprehend what is essential, “the only begotten Son

their reconciled Father in Christ Jesus : God the Son as their Saviour and Redeemer, who

which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him : " John i. 18. He has not only declared him in his revealed word, but he has declared him in his own person, for " he that hath seen " him " hath seen the Father." John xiv. 9. Hence the names of our Lord Jesus Christ denote *expression* : the " Son " is the *expression*, or image of the Father—" the WORD " is the *expression* of the idea in the mind. Philippians ii. 6. He is " in the FORM of God ; " Form or appearance denotes *expression*—" The IMAGE of the invisible God," Colossians i. 15. is that in *expression* which the Father is in abstract—" the express IMAGE of his person," Hebrews i. 3. not ἐικὼν as above but χαρακτήρ the character of the seal *expressed* on the wax—" the brightness of his glory ; " Hebrews i. 3. the very lustre and brilliancy of his attributes, the perfection of his perfections, and the glory of his glory manifested or *expressed* in its most luminous splendour. " It pleased the Father that " thus " in him should all fulness dwell ; " Colossians i. 19. and thus " in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily ; " Colosians ii. 9. or substantially, visibly, intelligibly.

The Holy Ghost is the AGENT of Deity—In *creation*, " and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Gen. i. 2. In *redemption*. " The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee." Luke i. 35. At his Baptism Jesus " saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him ; " Mat. iii. 16. he was " led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil ; " Matthew iv. 1. and it was " through the eternal Spirit " that he " offered himself without spot to God." Hebrews ix. 14. In *regeneration*—" Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John iii. 5.

And these three Persons are one God.

took upon him the nature of man for them ; and God the Holy Ghost who sanctifies, supports and comforts them. Here is the doctrine of the

The *second* Unity springs out of the first, and is that of God and man in the Person of the **EXPRESSION** of Deity,—Immanuel, God-man,—thus capable of becoming the Mediator, Redeemer, and Intercessor of fallen man, by taking our nature into his Deity, atoning for all our sins by the all-sufficient merits of his blood, and making each sin-polluted soul that believes in him, the partaker of the divine nature again, that it may be an inheritor of glory.

The *third* Unity springs out of the second, and is that of the Head with its body, the Church—the spiritual union of the believing soul with its God, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, “taking” of the things of Christ, and “shewing” John xvi. 15. them to that soul with experimental comprehension and loveliness. The imparted graces of which this union, or divine fellowship consists, are Christ’s, that “in all things he might have the pre-eminence,” Colossians i. 18. as well in our sanctification, as our justification. The agency by which it is originated, maintained and perfected, is that of the Spirit in the regeneration, sanctification and growing consolation of each individual believer, as the Spirit “glorifies” Christ in receiving of his grace, and applying it to the Church. These are the things “revealed, which belong to us and to our children :” they are unfathomable by the acutest intellect, and they are intelligible as applied by the Spirit to a humble and simple soul, even like that of “a weaned child ;” as seems to be plainly intimated by the Apostle, when after a full enforcement of the blessedness of this doctrine of the Trinity, he concludes by addressing the Church under the character of children. “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” In this view the Trinity is practically intelligible ; the very purpose I apprehend for which it is graciously revealed ; and “this is the true God, and eternal life.” 1 John v. 20, 21.

Trinity applied in power for the very purpose for which it was given—God intelligible as a God of mercy, in all the characters and offices in which he offers himself as a gracious God to recover a lost sinner, and to prepare his soul for heaven: and all the volumes that have ever been written on the subject are condensed in the essence of these brief words, **THE LOVE OF THE FATHER,—THE GRACE OF THE SON—and THE COMMUNION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.** And as a child may perceive the virtue of this gracious representation of the Godhead in his heart, though he cannot explain, he may feel, and say,¹ “truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

¹ John i. 3.

THE CHURCH.**LETTER V.****THE CHURCH.**

THE last party yet remains to be noticed, and that most deeply interested in the view of Baptismal privileges we have taken above.—This is THE CHURCH.

“ Me have ye bereaved of my children,”¹ has been her just complaint for centuries past. Faith is the Parent of her children, and faith having failed, her family has been proportionably contracted. It is from faith in the promise that the Church also expects the blessing. “ Receive him, O Lord, as thou hast promised by thy well-beloved Son”—“ that this Infant may enjoy the everlasting benediction of thy heavenly washing, and may come to the eternal kingdom which thou hast promised by Christ our Lord.” She entertains no doubt herself as to the performance of the promise towards the baptised Infant, provided the proper means be observed. These means she insists on largely in her address to the Sponsors; and as she entertains no doubt herself, so it is her unwearied effort, through-

¹ Gen. xlii. 36.

out the whole of the Baptismal and its kindred Services, to impress the minds of her people, the Sponsors, and the Child when arrived at years of discretion, with the same undoubting confidence in the promise of a Covenant-God, that he will assuredly "grant" the "things" that they "have prayed for," and "for his part will most surely keep and perform the promise" he has made.

It is therefore her desire continually to enlarge the communion of her saints ; and for this purpose she would have every child introduced into her communion visibly and openly, so soon as he may conveniently be brought to the church. She therefore directs, "The Curates of every Parish shall often admonish the people that they defer not the Baptism of their children longer than the first or second Sunday next after their Birth, or other Holy Day falling between, unless upon a great and reasonable cause, to be approved by the Curate." "And also they shall warn them, that without like great cause and necessity they procure not their children to be baptized at home in their houses." The Church further enjoins, "The people are to be admonished, that it is most convenient that Baptism should not be administered but upon Sundays, and other Holy-days, *when the most number of people come together* : as well for that the congregation there present may testify the receiving of them that be newly baptised into the number

of Christ's Church ; as also because in the Baptism of Infants every man present may be put in remembrance of his own profession made to God in his Baptism. For which cause also it is expedient that Baptism be ministered in the Vulgar Tongue."

Here surely is a jealous vigilance that all things may be done to excite and maintain the sympathy, and charity, and vital influence of a holy communion, all tending to the general edification of the Church.

First, Baptism is not to be deferred but from necessity, after "the first or second Sunday next after" the "birth." If the Jewish Infant was introduced into the Church on the eighth day after its birth, and received the sign and seal of the covenant ; why is the heir of a brighter dispensation to be excluded from the earliest participation of its blessings ; and of the interest, and love, and communion of that Church into which he is admitted ? nothing but necessity therefore is deemed by the Church a sufficient reason for withholding the Infant from its bosom of grace, so soon as it is capable of partaking of the blessings of its communion.

Secondly, so desirous is the Church of promoting the holy fellowship of her members, and of maintaining their gracious sympathies towards each other, especially towards the lambs of the flock, who most need her tender care, that she will have them receive the sign and seal of her

communion, not in the private chamber of their natural parent before the confined domestic circle, but in their spiritual "Mother's house," and in "the chamber of her that conceived" ¹ them, even the fullest resort of her children in the "great Congregation;" Parents are therefore to be warned, that without "great cause and necessity they procure not their children to be baptized at home in their houses." On the contrary, "the People are to be admonished, that, it is most convenient, that Baptism should not be administered but upon Sundays, and other Holy-days, when *the most number of people come together.*" The first reason assigned for this publicity is, "that the Congregation there present may testify the receiving of them that be newly baptized into the number of Christ's Church." And why "testify," but that they may be interested in each child as he is respectively introduced "into the number of Christ's Church." But what interest can the Church take in a child baptised in secret, whom she never saw, never recognised? what sympathies can the Church entertain for a child baptised "at home," not visibly incorporated into her communion, and of whom she formally and sacramentally knows nothing? She cannot "testify" that which she never saw, and of which she has no knowledge or experience but from the

¹ Song of Solomon, viii. 2;

Register book of the parish. Here is not only no personal knowledge of the Child, but no feeling is excited in favour of the baptised Infant, by her prayers being solicited and obtained. Prayer is perhaps the sweetest expression of the Communion of the saints : while they pray together they are brought into the experience of the most vital blessing of their communion : they are all together before the throne of one Covenant-God and Father ; they are pleading the merits, and availing themselves of the intercession of one common Saviour ; and they are exercising the graces and enjoying the acknowledged presence of one common Sanctifier and Comforter. Prayer is the loveliest and the liveliest sympathy of Christian communion : and therefore the best mode of "testifying" the introduction of the Infant into the number of Christ's Church." But how can the Church feel the lively interest of prayer for a child of which she knows nothing ?

The second reason assigned for the introduction of the Child to Baptism, "when the most number of people come together," is, "because in the Baptism of Infants every man present may be put in remembrance of his own profession made to God in his Baptism." As Baptismal obligations end not but with life itself, it is wise in the Church to suggest to her members a perpetual memorial of them. It is her "endeavour that" we "may have these things always in re-

membrance : ”¹ for this purpose the instances of Baptism are continually presenting to us the profession we also have made, that we may observe and adorn it by our life and conversation. But who can be reminded of his profession when there is no instance to remind him ? and is it not on this account chiefly that any thing like a reference to Baptismal obligations has become almost obsolete ? who examines his conduct by the rule of his Baptismal vows ? who animates himself to holy exertion, by recurring to his Baptismal privileges ? The majority of the Christian world seems agreed to retain the name of Baptism and the rite of Baptism, but to have equally agreed to permit its virtue and efficacy to sink into desuetude and neglect, whether under the winning Popery of the delusion, that the external washing of water is the internal cleansing of the Spirit, or the scarcely less pernicious mischief, a total disregard of the promise and of the privileges connected with it.

The remaining provision for publicity made by the Church is,—“ for which cause also it is expedient that Baptism be administered in the Vulgar Tongue.” Christianity is a common boon, and admission to the communion of the Church equally free to high and low, rich and poor, educated and uneducated : the one and the other meet here without distinction as sinners :

¹ 2 Pet. i. 15.

all needing mercy, since “ all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” The common language of the country, therefore, is the most expedient channel for conveying common blessings, for what all are privileged to enjoy, all are concerned to understand.

And here let me vindicate our Reformers, from an objection which I have heard urged against them, as to the presumed interest which the Church is said to take in the Baptism of the Infant. It has been said, that when they use this expression, “ for the young babes, their parent’s or the *church’s* profession sufficeth,”¹ that they affix no positive meaning to the word “ Church ; ” that they use loose and indefinite language ; and, in plain terms, that they did not understand what they were talking about. I admit, that alienated, as the Child is, from the Church by the prevailing mode of Baptism, neither Infant, nor Parents, nor Sponsors being presented to the Church in her full Congregation, that the term has no intelligible meaning ; but then surely the Reformers are free from blame, whose whole endeavour in our formularies is to render the presentation of the Infant as public as possible, to engage the interest, and to awaken the holy sympathies of the Congregation in favor of the baptised Infant ; that,

¹ King Edward the Sixth’s Catechism, Fathers of E. C. vol. ii. p. 369.

in fact, no one spiritual member of that holy communion should behold the Child, but with an interest and a sympathy which may issue in subsequent attention to its spiritual welfare ; so that, in fact, every member of the Congregation becomes the Sponsor of the Child. Is it just then to cast a reproach upon the Reformers which is due to our own negligence alone ? And does not our own want of discernment both evidence and reprove that unbelief, which has deprived the Sacrament of its meaning, and the Church of that interest in the baptised, which the faith of our Reformers steadily and uniformly ascribed to it ? Let us but attach the same important meaning to this Sacrament that the Reformers did, and the Sponsorial responsibility of the Church will be both intelligible and appropriate. Let the Church once feel a maternal interest in the Child introduced to her communion, and a parent's regard and a parent's attentions will follow : it is experience alone which can render the idea truly intelligible. But is it not somewhat ungracious in us, to neglect the means expressly provided by our Fathers, to secure the interest of the Church in favor of the Child, and then to charge upon them the darkness of that ignorance, into which our own errors have betrayed us ?

Here then, my Dear Friend, let me ask what sight can be more interesting than that of the Baptismal Service of our Church, conducted on

the principles above stated? Why should a large interest be excited in favor of Jewish children, or Mahomedan children, or Heathen children, who are presented for Baptism, and crowds attend to "testify" their interest in this sight, while no similar expression of interest attends the presentation of our children or of those of our neighbours? Assuredly either Baptism is nothing more than an empty sign or an unmeaning ceremony in our esteem; or we are regardless of the spiritual welfare both of our own children and of those of our friends. But do they stand in less need of covenant mercies than the children of the Jews? Do they less need the accrediting sign and seal of such mercies; or do they less need the prayers and communion of the Church? But once open the true meaning of our Baptismal Service, and awaken a real interest for the spiritual welfare of our children, and what Service is so calculated to give that interest due expression, and to maintain and confirm it as our Service of Baptism, understood by the respective parties according to the above explanation?

Place before your view, then, the full Congregation; the Parents, the Sponsors, and the Church, presenting and receiving the Infant, in virtue of the promise made to the believer and his children.—The Congregation committing the Child of their hopes to approved Sponsors, and accepting their promise, as a pledge that the

Child shall “ be virtuously brought up to lead a godly and a Christian life ; ” and the Sponsors engaging the prayers of the Church, for every promised blessing to be poured forth and continued on their Infant charge. Infuse but spiritual life into all the parties engaged in this interesting work, active charity, lively faith, realizing hope, and holy expectation, and hear all these blessed graces actively expressing themselves in the prayer and praise of our admirable Service, and might we not hope that a Christian Communion,—even that fellowship of the saints, which was once so encouraged as forming the cement, and bond, and vital energy, and real glory of the Church,—might be generated in favor of the received and incorporated Infant, which might issue in unceasing prayers for its welfare, and an equally unceasing interest in its spiritual growth and prosperity ?

But let us advance still further, and see how every other formulary of our Church would receive a meaning, a beauty, a consistency, and a perfection, from this right understanding and observance of this initiatory Sacrament. And here it will be found, that the intelligence and spirit infused into the Baptismal Service, is the very soul which gives intelligence and spirit to every subsequent formulary ; for all the rest are subsequent, and are intended to give to this perfection and effect.

Trace the progress of this newly incorporated

member throughout the whole of the Church's communion, as that progress is exhibited in her respective offices. Say then, that the Parents, the Sponsors, the Child, and the Church, are all engaged in discharging the duties, and enjoying the privileges which the Church assumes them to be discharging and enjoying, towards one of God's elect children. Thus "virtuously brought up," and piously educated, "to lead a godly and a Christian life," and growing in grace himself, his catechetical instructions both at home and in the Church are producing the proper fruits, and there is a sound hope that he is in fact, what the promise at his Baptism gave assurance that he should be, "a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." In this hopeful state he is presented for Confirmation; and the Bishop assuming that God has "vouchsafed to regenerate" him "by water and the Holy Ghost," and to "give" him "forgiveness of all" his "sins," prays that God would—not begin a new work in him, but further and perfect what he has already begun,—would "strengthen" him "with the Holy Ghost the Comforter, and daily increase in" him his "manifold gifts of grace:" he also makes humble supplications, "for this "servant" of God, upon whom after the example of the Holy Apostles" he has "laid" his "hands, to certify" him "by this sign of" God's "favor and

gracious goodness towards" him : not to impart the incipient "favour and gracious goodness" of God "towards" him, for this he assumes the child has enjoyed from the hour of his Baptism ; but to certify him of it by the "sign," the imposition of hands ; the sign and seal of an instrument adding nothing thereto, but the final ratification and conclusive confirmation of its contents. To these petitions of her chief minister, the Church adds her hearty "Amen" of concurrence and consent ; testifying by her voice, her heart-felt interest in the confirmation of those graces and privileges, in the primary imparting of which she had "testified" a similar lively communion at the Baptism of the Child.

He is now admitted into the full participation of the privileges of the Church ; being free of that Sacrament, which she dignifies by the name of THE COMMUNION : intimating that it is the highest act of spiritual communion, whether with their Saviour or with each other, into which the faithful can be admitted on earth. With what real joy does the Church receive the Child thus Confirmed, into the choicest and richest privilege of her communion ! how does she seat her children with her at the same table of redeeming mercy, and invite them to partake of the same divine repast ! and how fully and perfectly are the awakened affections, and expectant graces of the newly confirmed grati-

fied, by his recognition of the same privileges enjoyed in THE COMMUNION, with which he had long been acquainted in the former days of his childhood as he had found them in Baptism, and its two kindred Services ! After having "duly received" those "holy mysteries," he heartily thanks God, "for that thou dost vouchsafe to feed us, with the spiritual food of the most precious body and blood of thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, and dost assure us thereby of thy favour and goodness towards us." These latter are the very expressions of the Confirmation Service : they are words most dear to him. "The favour and goodness of God towards" him are those blessings of which he desires especially to be assured. Of these he was "certified" at his Confirmation by the "sign" of the imposition of hands ; but now he has a far richer assurance, being a spiritual partaker of "the most precious body and blood of" the Son of God, his "Saviour Jesus Christ." He proceeds to thank God with the Congregation present, "that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of thy Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people, and are also heirs through hope of thy everlasting kingdom by the merits of the most precious death and passion of thy dear Son." Here he blesses God, for the assurance, that he is indeed what he was made at his Baptism, a "very member incorporate in the mystical body of" the "Son,

which is the blessed company of all faithful people," or the adopted children of God ; and that he is also an "heir through hope of" God's "everlasting kingdom :" and his prayer is that he "may continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works as" God "has prepared for" him "to walk in." He is "God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God has "prepared" for him to walk in,¹ and he is now admitted into the full participation of all the rights and privileges which belong to the "holy fellowship" of God's elect.²

Let us now proceed further. With what holy feeling and spiritual intelligence does he now join the Congregational communion of the Church ! The Morning and Evening Services of the Liturgy, are now spiritually understood, and relished, and enjoyed ; he has tasted that the Lord is gracious, and he feels how admirably adapted our Liturgy is, to express the lively feelings of a gracious soul. It is no longer a dead letter and a lifeless form ; but viewed as the rich expression of the "Communion of the Saints," it receives a life, and vigour, and spi-

¹ Ephes. ii. 10.

² See the Second Prayer after the reception of the Communion ; a prayer deserving of more frequent use, as it abounds in the richest assemblage of the assurances of faith and hope, and in this respect probably exceeds every other prayer throughout the whole of our Liturgy.

ritual meaning, which, in the absence of this view of the subject, it fails to have. As none but a spiritual soul can understand the Liturgy, so none but a spiritual soul can enjoy it. It is that true and essential Gospel which exactly suits the case of a redeemed sinner. It opens with abundant promises to the penitent, to "turn away from his wickedness and live :" on the promises, it grounds its hope of pardon in confession ; on the promises it grounds all its supplications ; and on the promises it concludes its petitions, that God "would fulfil the desires and petitions of" his servants. Amidst every variety of devotion, it prays that God would "make" his "chosen people joyful," that he would deliver them for his "name's sake,"—for the sake of his mercy and truth ; that for his "Honour's" sake, he would help his Church now as he had helped their Fathers ; and "that in all our troubles, we may put our whole trust and confidence in his mercy." None but a gracious soul can surely comprehend these petitions or enjoy them. They are the "chosen people" of God, who alone can rejoice in these things ; and the Church assumes, that all who partake of her Liturgy, as well as all who partake of her other Services, being truly regenerated at their Baptism, are "chosen people" of God indeed. And it is only by improving Baptismal privileges, and discharging Baptismal obligations, that we can realize her just assump-

tions, or fulfil her just expectations. Thus the Church proceeds, with a most harmonious consistency, to impart the blessings of her communion to all her subjects, both infant and adult, simply under one character, and that as the “chosen” of God.

The Church continues to express her interest in the welfare of her young charge as he attains manhood, and having been hitherto in the inferior relation in the family of his Parents, is now about to be admitted into that superior relation, which while it justifies him in “leaving his Father and Mother,” invests him certainly with one new relation, that of Husband, and probably with two others, those of Parent and Master also. She cannot permit this child of her prayers, to enter upon so important a change, without again distinctly making him the subject of her communion, and testifying her interest in his welfare, by admitting him to this blessing in the midst of her Congregation. This is not indeed expressly stated in her rubric; it is there ordered, that “the persons to be married shall come into the body of the Church, with their friends and neighbours;” but publicity is to be given to the proposed marriage, by the publication of the Banns in the Parish Church of each party, for “three several Sundays or Holy-days;” and it is stated, that “it is convenient that the new-married persons

should receive the Holy Communion at the time of their marriage, or at the first opportunity after their marriage ; ” and as the Communion is a Congregational act, it implies that the marriage should be celebrated before the Congregation. No act of her baptised member, of which she can take especial cognizance, is suffered to pass by her with indifference, “ for the members should have the same care one for another.”¹

And while the Church admits the offspring of this marriage into her bosom by Baptism, as she received the Parents before ; she does not forget to take her share of interest in the recovery of the Mother, by making her “ safe deliverance and ” preservation “ in the great danger of childbirth ” an occasion of Congregational praise to God for “ his goodness.” “ The woman, at the usual time after her Delivery,” comes “ into the Church decently apparelled, and there ” kneels “ down in some convenient place, as hath been accustomed, or as the Ordinary shall direct,” that all may see her about whom all are interested : and after repeating that graphical description² of the state of her soul, during the late trying circumstances through which she has past, she rejoices to express her gratitude with the assembled Church, “ I will pay my

¹ Cor. xii. 25.

² Ps. cxvi.

vows now in the presence of all his people : "in the courts of the Lord's house, even in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem." And that she may enjoy the richest act of thanksgiving to which the Church can admit her, she is invited to the Eucharist, for "if there be a Communion, it is convenient that she receive the Holy Communion." Nothing that can happen to the baptised or his family, is foreign from her regard ; that baptised person is a saint, and every saint is entitled to the sympathy of the whole blessed communion to which he belongs.

This interest remains undiminished throughout the whole of the earthly pilgrimage of the baptised. Is he "any ways afflicted or distressed in mind, body, or estate ?" if so, he acquaints "the Communion of Saints" with his malady, and requests their prayers for him ; and the Church prays "especially" for him "for whom" her "prayers are desired ;" for "if one member suffers," so intimate is her communion, that "all the members suffer with it." Has he been visited with mercies ? he requests the Church, as partaker of his joy, to unite with him in thanksgiving ; and the Congregation offer to God "most humble and hearty thanks for all" his goodness and loving-kindness to us, and to all men, particularly to "him," who desires now to offer up "his praises and thanksgivings for thy late mercies vouchsafed to him ;" here

" if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."¹

And if he be detained from the public " Communion of the Saints" by sickness, the Church does not forget him, but as she is desirous to preserve and continue this sick member in the " unity of the Church," she sends her minister into the chamber of sickness to prepare him for his latter end. Of all our formularies, this is the one which I have heard stated to be least worthy of the piety and judgment of the Reformers; and more especially on this account, that it makes no provision for diversity of character; that it is only adapted to the case of the real Christian, and that the unregenerate man seems to have no share in it. But is not this objection the distinctive character of the formulary? and does it not show its perfect consistency with all the other formularies, which uniformly assume the regeneration of their subject, and treat him as one of God's elect? It is to the baptised, regenerate, and elect, that the Church sends her minister to comfort him under his sickness, and to prepare him for that solemn change, into which he may be about to pass. Immediately that " he comes into the sick man's presence," he asks God to " spare" his people whom he has redeemed with " his most precious blood;"

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 26.

and shortly after, he prays, “ save thy servant which putteth his trust in thee : ” and in this spirit assuming the regeneration of the “ sick member,” the prayers proceed. “ Look upon him with the eyes of thy mercy, give him comfort and sure confidence in thee—keep him in perpetual peace and safety—extend thy accustomed goodness to this thy servant—sanctify this thy fatherly correction to him, that the sense of his weakness may—not give him faith as a new thing, or repentance as a new thing ; but may strengthen and confirm them—“ may add strength to his faith, and seriousness to his repentance.” In these expressions the Church gives no hint of her “ member ” not being regenerated, on the contrary she assumes the fact, and her minister prays for the growth and establishment of grace in him who already possesses it. So in the “ Exhortation ” to the sick man, the Church does not hint that his “ sickness is sent ” to regenerate, but to sanctify him, and that it may “ turn to ” his “ profit,” and *help “ him ” forward* in the right way that leadeth unto everlasting life.” The “ sick member ” is exhorted “ in the name of God to remember the profession which ” he “ made unto God in ” his “ Baptism : ” it was at that time that he was regenerated, and whether his present sickness be “ to try ” his “ patience,” to illustrate his “ faith,” or “ to correct ” whatsoever is offensive to “ the eyes of ” his “ heavenly Father,” his

whole course from the font to the grave is but an exhibition of his Baptismal profession, which is shortly to be consummated in glory.

Let us say then that the closing scene has arrived : and that this “member of Christ,” and this “child of God,” not being suffered “for any pains of death to fall from him,” has entered into his rest, is now in possession of his inheritance, and as Bishop Hall calls him, is now a “Glorious Comprehensor” in the kingdom of heaven. The Church cannot forego her communion, so long as any vestige remains of him who has so long enjoyed it. He has come to his end like a shock of corn in his season, rich in grace, and ripe for glory : and the Church, while she commits his body to the ground, “in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life,” rejoices over the happy transfer of the glorified spirit, now “delivered from the burden of the flesh,” and admitted into the mansions of “joy and felicity.” With what genuine and sacred joy, do the smiles of grace irradiate the tears of human infirmity, when the Church can calmly terminate her earthly communion with her departed member in these heartfelt thanksgivings, “We give thee hearty thanks, for that it hath pleased thee to deliver this our Brother out of the miseries of this sinful world ; beseeching thee that it may please thee of thy gracious goodness shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect, and to hasten thy kingdom, that we, with all those that

are departed in the true faith of thy holy name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in thy eternal and everlasting glory, through Jesus Christ, our Lord ! ” This Brother was recognised as one of “ God’s elect,” at his introduction into the Church by Baptism ; as an elect of God, he has been uniformly recognised throughout all his pilgrimage in all the formularies of the Church, which express his various communion with her ; and now when his earthly course is run, and his mortal remains are brought to receive the last affecting token of her regard, she consigns them to the ground as those of an elect of God, “ beseeching ” him “ of his gracious goodness shortly to accomplish the number of his elect, and to hasten ” his “ kingdom ; ” when this troubled scene of sin and sorrow shall for ever cease, and when all those who witness his interment, together with all that are “ departed in the true faith of ” God’s “ holy name,” may be perfected both in body and soul, “ in his eternal and everlasting glory.”

And here, my Dear Friend, can it be necessary to draw your attention to the intelligible symmetry, the harmonious consistency, and the exquisite beauty of our Church, when viewed in the cheering light of this interpretation. What a rich and ample provision is here made for “ the Communion of the Saints ! ” what an extension of charity to the bodies and souls of men from

infancy to age ! what efficient means of renovation amidst the miseries and ruins of the fall ! what an approximation of earth to heaven, of grace to glory, of man regenerated and renewed to the spiritual image of his God ! In vain does my imagination strive to pourtray a scene of things upon earth so perfectly lovely : once let faith, and love, and prayer, but set the wheels of this spiritual machinery in motion, once let the gracious principle of Baptism,—regeneration according to the promise,—be infused into that and all its sister formularies, and you would witness a condition of human society infinitely beyond that which fable ever fancied, which the prophetic pages of truth have alone anticipated,—a scene of amity, and peace, and love, and joy, and blessedness,

“ Such as earth
Saw never, such as heav’n stoops down to see.”

LETTER VI.

OBJECTIONS STATED AND ANSWERED.

THERE are two principal objections which I anticipate to the above interpretation of our Baptismal Service and the corresponding formulaires of our Church. The one arising from the *fact*—that Baptism does not produce these desirable results which the above interpretation would lead us to expect: the other, questioning the principle of regeneration according to the promise, and hesitating to admit that we are warranted in expecting so much from it. It is but justice to our subject, to answer these objections, before we proceed to state the advantages with which the above interpretation would, with the blessing of God, be accompanied, if carried out into its practical detail, to our Church and consequently to our country.

First then the *fact*—the real condition of things under our present administration of Baptism, may be insisted on, and it may be said, “are not Parents and Sponsors and the Church often disappointed? Does the Child thus incorporated

into the visible Church always grow up a holy child? in a word is the promise generally performed?"

We may answer first, that to order events is the prerogative of God. His precept is the rule of our duty, and his promise is our encouragement to discharge it; and if, after the persevering discharge of duty, with prayer for a blessing on the same, we perceive no fruit to the conclusion of the life of the baptised, we may still trust that our faith shall not be without a blessing, and say, "though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength."¹ Our grand consideration should be, Have we the warrant for the practice? is the precept to baptise clear? Have we then the promise of a blessing to encourage us? are promises of spiritual blessings given to the Children of believers, and did our Saviour invite the Infants to him and bless them when they were brought? then let us act the precept, and plead the promise, and leave the event to God. Duty, faith, and prayer, are ours; the event,—the blessing is solely the prerogative of God.

Or we may answer, with the concluding clause of the Seventeenth Article. "We must receive God's promises in such wise, as they be generally set forth to us in holy Scripture: and

¹ Isa. xl ix. 5.

in our doings that will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared unto us in the word of God." " Secret things belong unto the Lord our God ; " with his hidden will, his secret intentions, no soul of man must presume to interfere ; for they are the attributes and prerogatives of Absolute Deity, and eminently and exclusively " belong " to him. The " things that are revealed belong to us and to our children : " ² they are rich expressions of his infinite mercy to us sinners, free intimations of his sovereign love, and as our faith acts upon them with fullest confidence of a blessing, even so shall that blessing be bestowed.

Or we may answer in the following full and satisfactory statement of Beza. " There is a special regard to be had to the Infants of the faithful. For although they have not faith in effect, such as those have that be of age, yet so it is that they have the seed and the spring in virtue of the promise, which was received and apprehended by the Elders. For God promised not us only to be our God, if we believe in him, but also that he will be the God of our offspring and seed, yea unto a thousand degrees, that is, to the last end. Therefore said St. Paul, that the children of the faithful be sanctified from their Mothers' womb. By what right or title then do they refuse to give them the *mark* and

¹ Deut. xxix. 29.

ratiſation of that thing which they have and possess already? And if they allege yet further, that although they come of faithful Elders or Parents, it followeth not that they be of the number of the elect, and by consequent, that they be sanctified, (for God hath not chosen all the children of Abraham and Isaac,) the answer is easy to be made; that it is true all those be not of the kingdom of God which be born of faithful Parents, but of good right *we leave this secret to God for to judge*, which only knoweth it, yet notwithstanding we presume justly to be the children of God, all those which be issued and descended from faithful Parents ACCORDING TO THE PROMISE, forasmuch as it appeareth not to us the contrary. According to the same, we baptise the young children of the faithful, as they have used and done from the Apostle's time in the Church of God, and we doubt not but God by this mark, (joined with the prayers of the Church, which is their assistant, doth seal the adoption and election in those which he hath predestinate eternally, whether they die before they come to age of discretion, or whether they live to bring forth the fruits of their faith in due time, and according to the means which God hath ordained.”¹

It is some years since I met with the above

¹ See “a Booke of notes and common places,” &c. by John Marbeck, 1581, Article “Baptism.”

extract from Beza; but the increasing acquaintance which those years have afforded me with the writers of the Reformation, has convinced me that it contains the very pith of the question of Infant-baptism, as held by the Reformers generally, whether of our own or of foreign Churches. They conceived that the children of the faithful were heirs according to the promise, they acted in faith of that promise, and they expected the blessing from God, whose prerogative it is to bestow it.

But may we not further answer on God's part, who shall presume to say in what degree Baptism is really effectual to the imparting of grace, since the virtue of Baptism is not complete till grace be consummated in glory. "Baptism is not done only at the font," says Archbishop Usher, "which is a thing that deceives many: for it runs through our whole life; nor hath it consummation till our dying day, till we receive final grace: the force and efficacy of Baptism is for the washing away of sin to-morrow as well as the day past: the death of sin is not till the death of the body, and therefore it's said, "we must be buried with him by Baptism into his death." Now after death we receive final grace; till when, this washing and the virtue thereof hath not its coconsummation."¹ Who then shall presume to say at what season

¹ See Eighteen Sermons preached in Oxford, 1640, p. 55.

it may please God to make Baptism effectual by the vital calling of the Spirit ? the whole season from the Baptismal introduction of the Child into the visible Church, to his passing out of it into an eternal state, is the day of grace, in which is that “due season” when it may please God to call him by his Spirit. The day of grace has its twelve hours : some are effectually called in the first or second, or in early life ; some in the sixth or seventh, or in manhood ; and others in the eleventh or twelfth, or in declining age. And let it not be forgotten, that not only is the day graduated, but the hour is graduated also. The twelfth hour has its degrees ; and how many are effectually called by the Spirit within that latter period, which is frequently spent within the curtains of sickness, or the chamber of wasting infirmity, who shall say ? Who shall “*limit the Holy One of Israel,*”¹ or presume to impose bounds on that grace which is boundless ? Who can seize a wave of the sea in his hand, as it washes our shores, and fix it in stationary thralldom ? will it not quickly join its kindred element, mingle itself with the ocean, expatriate in the world of waters, and float to either pole ? Free grace cannot be restrained. To our apprehension, had we witnessed the scene, the thief on the cross would have been within an hour of hell ; it only remained for his legs

¹ Ps. lxxviii. 41.

to be broken, that the body might be taken away : but in the eternal counsels of free mercy, that very hour was appointed as the “due season” for the Spirit to work in him that repentance, which was not to be repented of, and that faith which was to issue in immortal salvation. The virtue of Baptismal Regeneration is only known to him, who knows the secrets of the heart, and who orders all things after the good pleasure of his own will. Doubtless he will honor his own appointments, and invest his Sacraments with due power and success : it is not for man to limit their efficacy, or to confine the freedom of grace within the narrow restraint of finite apprehensions : and as it is the freedom of divine grace which encourages the believer to dive into the dungeon of the most hardened criminal, or to attend the dying bed of the most profligate debauchee ; so the Church asserts the same freedom of grace when over the body of every baptised member that she commits to the earth, she expresses “sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The grace that is in Christ Jesus being so free and so full, that it becomes man to give it the largest credit, —even to encourage the hope that with the very last gasp, the “free Spirit” may impart spiritual life to the soul, and by one single effort pour in upon the astonished man, a combined flood of grace and glory. The same moment,

in the sinner's experience, *may* be that both of incipient and of final grace, as the same moment is that of final grace and of incipient glory.¹

But with respect to the failure of Baptismal blessings, we may, lastly, well vindicate the ways of God to man, by proposing "the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering,"² to our admiration and our love. How grossly has this blessed Sacrament been insulted by our ignorance, our negligence, our indifference, and our contempt? Treated as Baptism has been among us, could any reasonable man hope for a general blessing to attend the ordinance? Without faith in the parties concerned, without intelligence, without any well-understood hope of a blessing, without any distinct expectation of spiritual advantage, without subsequent pleading of the promise in prayer, or subsequent effort to secure the blessing, without one thought of a *godly* education,

¹ The *possibilities* of divine mercy afford no just argument either to commit sin, or to continue in the impenitent indulgence of it. The contrary doctrine may suggest arguments on paper; but where is the practical evidence of their truth? Has one thief been known to go on the high-way, because the thief was forgiven on the cross? Or one unhappy female justified her continuance in profligate habits, because "a woman in the city which was a sinner" had her sins forgiven her? Such are too often known to "despise the riches of his goodness," but I have never yet known one that justified continuance in sin by the *possibilities* of the divine sovereignty.

² Rom. ii. 4,

or one endeavour to evidence Baptismal privileges in the nascent graces of the Baptised; with no habitual instruction to avoid the snares of the world, the flesh, and the devil, or rather with no attempt to impart it; and, in one word, to disregard throughout the education of our children, both Baptismal privileges and Baptismal obligations, as though the ceremony of Baptism were all, and that nothing more were intended—if this, my Dear Friend, be the general complexion of Baptismal observance among us, and if it be so at this moment, surely we may find ample cause of failure in our own remissness, and ample cause of thanksgiving that the God of all grace has so patiently borne with our contempt, and that while we have been despising the ordinance of his grace, he has been mercifully exercising the graces of his forbearance and long-suffering towards us.

But I had rather express this state of things in the language of others than of my own.

“ We are baptised in our infancy, that is, as I conceive, dedicated and devoted to God’s service, by our Parents and the Church, as young Samuel was by his mother Hannah; and there we take a solemn vow, to forsake the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all the covetous desires of it; to forsake also all the carnal desires of the flesh, and not to follow nor be led by them. This vow

we take when we be children, and understand it not : and, how many there are, who know, and consider, and regard what they have vowed, when they are become men, almost as little as they did being children ! Consider the lives and public actions of most men of all conditions, in court, city, and country, and then deny it, if you can, that those three things which we have renounced in our Baptism—the profits, honours, and pleasures of the world, are not the very gods which divide the world amongst them, are not served more devoutly, confided in more heartily, loved more affectionately, than the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in whose name we are baptised ? Deny, if you can, the daily and constant employment of all, to be either a violent prosecution of the vain pomp and glory of the world, or of the power, riches, and contemptible profits of it, or of the momentary or unsatisfying pleasures of the flesh, or else of the more diabolical humours of pride, malice, revenge, and such like. And yet with this empty form we please and satisfy ourselves, as well as if we were lively born again by the Spirit of God, not knowing or not regarding what St. Peter hath taught us, that the Baptism which must save us, is, “ Not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience to God.” 1 Pet. iii. 21.

“ When we are come to years capable of instruction, many, which is lamentable to consider, are so little regarded by themselves or

others, that they continue little better than Pagans in a commonwealth of Christians, and know little more of God or of Christ, than if they had been bred in the Indies. A lamentable case, and which will one day lie heavy upon their account, which might have amended it and did not. But many, I confess, are taught to act over this play of religion, and learning to say, "Our Father, which art in Heaven," and, "I believe in God the Father Almighty :" but, where are the men that live so, as if they did believe in earnest, that God is their Almighty Father ? Where are they that fear him, and trust him, and depend upon him only for their whole happiness, and love him, and obey him, as in reason we ought to do to our Almighty Father ? Who, if he be our Father, and we be indeed his children, will do for us all the good he can ; and if he be Almighty, can do for us all the good he will ; and yet, how few are there, who love him with half that affection as children usually do their parents, or believe him with half that simplicity, or serve him with half that diligence ? "¹

Such was the state of Baptismal observance in the time of Chillingworth. Let us next attend to a more modern evidence.

"As it (Christianity) has introduced such a new state of things, and so fully informed us of

¹ Chillingworth's Works, Sermon i. p. 333.

the nature of man, the ends of his creation, the state of his condition ; as it has fixed all our goods and evils, taught us the means of purifying our souls, pleasing God, and becoming eternally happy ; one might naturally suppose, that every Christian country abounded with schools for the teaching, not only a few questions and answers of a catechism, but for the forming, training, and practising youths in such an outward course of life, as the highest precepts, the strictest rules, and the sublimest doctrines of Christianity require.

“ An education under Pythagoras, or Socrates, had no other end, but to teach youth to think, judge, act, and follow such rules of life, as Pythagoras, and Socrates used. And is it not as reasonable to suppose, that a Christian education should have no other end, but to teach youth how to think, and judge, and act, and live according to the strictest laws of Christianity ?

“ At least one would suppose, that in all Christian schools, the teaching youth to begin their lives in the spirit of Christianity, in such severity of behaviour, such abstinence, sobriety, humility, and devotion, as Christianity requires, should not only be more, but an hundred times more regarded, than any, or all things else.

—, “ But, alas ! our modern education is not of this kind.

“ The first temper that we try to awaken in children, is pride ; as dangerous a passion as

that of lust. We stir them up to vain thoughts of themselves, and do every thing we can, to puff up their minds with a sense of their own abilities.

“ Whatever way of life we intend them for, we apply to the fire and vanity of their minds, and exhort them to every thing from corrupt motives ; we stir them up to action from principles of strife and ambition, from glory, envy, and a desire of distinction, that they may excel others, and shine in the eyes of the world.

“ We repeat and inculcate these motives upon them, till they think it a part of their duty to be proud, envious, and vain-glorious of their own accomplishments.

“ And when we have taught them to scorn to be out-done by any, to bear no rival, to thirst after every instance of applause, to be content with nothing but the highest distinctions ; then we begin to take comfort in them, and promise the world some mighty things from youths of such a glorious spirit.

“ If children are intended for holy orders, we set before them some eminent orator, whose fine preaching has made him the admiration of the age, and carried him through all the dignities and preferments of the church.

“ We encourage them to have these honours in their eye, and to expect the reward of their studies from them.

“ If the youth is intended for a trade, we bid

him look at all the rich men of the same trade, and consider how many are carried about in their stately coaches, who began in the same low degree as he now does. We awaken his ambition, and endeavour to give his mind a right turn, by often telling him how very rich such and such a tradesman died.

“ If he is to be a lawyer, then we set great counsellors, lords, judges, chancellors, before his eyes. We tell him what great fees and great applause attend fine pleading. We exhort him to take fire at these things, to raise a spirit of emulation in himself, and to be content with nothing less than the highest honours of the long robe.

“ That this is the nature of our best education, is too plain to need any proof; and I believe there are few parents, but would be glad to see these instructions daily given to their children.

“ And after all this we complain of the effects of pride.”¹

Such was the anti-baptismal education of baptised England in the days of Law. And can it be said that both these descriptions do not suit our own times?

Here then we account but too clearly for the fact, the failure of Baptismal blessings among us, when we trace it to our own remissness and

¹ “A Serious Call,” &c. pp. 236—7.

neglect alone. No, God has not been unmindful of his promise ; but we have been unmindful of our obligations : God has not failed to do his part, but we have failed to do ours : " How often would I have gathered thy children together ! " whence then the failure ? " but ye would not." ¹ " God is " faithful, " who also will do it ; " ² but man is faithless, and but too plainly shows that he disregards the promise, by his indifference to the means of securing its blessings. Is it needful to accumulate evidence of this fact, when the general state of Christian society in the professing world exhibits the worldly and unchristian appearance that it does at present ? And is it still necessary to repeat, that while the two great descriptions among us, both the men of God and men of the world, under different sentiments indeed, equally concur in depriving this Sacrament of its due observance, and equally dishonour its vital efficacy in declining to apply it in the education of the baptised, no divine blessing can justly be expected. When God ordains the end, he ordains the means also, and if man will neglect the means is it not the weakest enthusiasm to expect the end ? We hear much of enthusiasm : but what a wide-wasting enthusiasm prevails on this subject of Baptism, over a large portion of the baptised Christian world ! Never let us forget

¹ Mat. xxiii. 37.

² 1 Thess. v. 24.

in the words of Hooker, “To our own safety our own sedulity is required.” It is not the promise given that can benefit us, but the promise accepted. When the High Priest went into the Holy of Holies, “not without blood,”¹ it was not the provision of blood only that was required, it must be sprinkled also. It is not a Saviour provided only that can benefit us, but a Saviour applied. It is not a covenant entered into that can avail us, but a covenant observed. “Then,” says Usher, that is, at Baptism “thou enterest into God’s livery, mark this, for by it I strive only to bring thee back to thyself. Thou enterest into covenant with him, thou bindest thyself to forsake the world, the flesh, and the Devil; *and we should make this use of Baptism, as now to put it in practice.* When we promised there were two things in the indenture; one, that God will give Christ to us; the other that we must forsake all the sinful lusts of the flesh; this is that makes Baptism to be Baptism indeed to us.”² Let this simple question then be asked, have we done that part of the covenant which “makes Baptism to be Baptism indeed?” Let the tens of thousands who have never once thought of Baptismal blessings or obligations after the administration of the rite till the season of Confirmation, answer this question, and let the scores who have declined Sponsorial

¹ Heb. ix. 7.

² See “Eighteen Serm.” as above, p. 54.

responsibility from timidity and unbelief answer the same, and it will but too plainly appear, from our own confession, that the *fact* itself,—the failure of Baptismal blessings among us—must be justly ascribed to our non-observance of the covenant, to our own neglect, our own unbelief. Indeed were it not for the fashion of a Christian name, the expediency of a register of that name for secular purposes, and the frequent hope of temporal advantage, for any spiritual renewal that is expected from it, would not the administration of Baptism be nearly obsolete?

Surely then it is our part to vindicate the faithfulness of God, by a penitent confession of our own failure of faith and duty, and to acknowledge that “it is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.”¹

The second objection proposed, is to the principle itself upon which the whole of our superstructure is built, viz. that we are not warranted in concluding that believing Parents have these exceeding rich and precious promises with respect to their Children; consequently that as Baptism is the seal of these promises our assumption is false, that they are indeed “members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.”

¹ Lament. iii. 22..

And here I must plainly confess that to answer this objection with effectual suasion, so as to convince the understanding, and to affect the heart, is a task utterly beyond any power of statement I can hope to possess, or the strength of any evidence I may hope to accumulate. If I could overwhelm the mind with conviction, and silence every whisper of contradiction, I should still find the main assertor of this objection so deeply intrenched within the native depravity of the human heart, that not only no power of man but even of Angel, could avail to disturb him. Unbelief is our deadliest foe, it stands opposed in determined resistance to the promise ; and nothing but that "mighty power which" the Father "wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead,"¹ can subdue this tyrant, and deliver the human heart from his controul. I have found this generally to be the fact. Those persons of decided piety, to whom I have proposed the above interpretation, have staggered in the very outset. They have said, "But has God given these promises to the Children of believers ? are believers so signally privileged ?" They have questioned the reality of the promise, not the just claim of the children to the seal of that promise in Baptism. I am not therefore, in addressing the members of our Established Church, so much concerned to justify the

¹ Eph. i. 20.

application of the seal, as the reality and validity of the indenture itself. Their objection strikes directly at the root; and with one mighty blow, the tree, with all its fruits, is to be levelled with the earth. And this is no speculative objection; it is one of most pernicious efficacy in practice: for as such have no belief in the promise, neither do they discover any interest to secure the blessings it bestows.

I will offer then one or two plain suggestions which, though to my own apprehension, for luminous exhibition of truth, they might be written with a sun-beam, I place no dependence on whatever, but commit solely to *His* effectual teaching who alone can enable us to receive the truth in the love of it, and whose grace alone can empower us to behold the promise as the promise of a Covenant-God, and to apply the same to our individual advantage. These suggestions will consist chiefly of the materials already provided in the second letter.

First then, how many and how minute are the promises of God to the bodies of believers! It would be offering a tedious illustration of this remark to advert to the large variety of Scriptures which promise blessings to the respective members of the body of the faithful man. His foot shall be blessed when he comes in and when he goes out: his "hand" shall be blessed "in all" its work: his eye, his ear, his mouth shall be blessed: nay, "the very hairs of" his

"head are *all* numbered."¹ And is there no blessing upon that which is most dear to him, "the fruit of his body?"² shall every member have its peculiar blessing? and is there no blessing upon that which, as it represents them all, is the glory of them all? Is there no blessing on that which, as it springs from that body, is to transmit its very self to posterity, and to protract its earthly name and existence to distant generations? It is surely enough to have asked these questions: the mercy of his Father which is in heaven, cannot have omitted to have made the most ample provision for that which is most dear to him of all his earthly blessings; and as this provision might be expected from his mercy, so that expectation is abundantly confirmed by the manifold declarations of his word.

Or is there indeed no promise given to the posterity of believers that is valid at this day? are we justified in applying all the other promises of Scripture, so far as they are applicable to our present condition and circumstances, but are those promises which relate to the children of believers restricted to the peculiar persons to whom they were respectively given? Is the whole book of God the rich mine of the believer's comforts, and the store-house of his most animating consolations; but when he attempts to

¹ Mat. x. 30.

² Deut. xxviii. 4.

apply these promised blessings to his children, is he to be denied the boon, and told, "these jewels are indeed deposited among the other precious stores of the treasury of grace, but like the royal crown, they are not for common use; they were bestowed exclusively for the use of the original favourite, but the other children of the family have ever been forbidden to enjoy them?" Shall the Spirit, by the mouth of St. Paul, apply the promise originally bestowed upon Joshua, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,"¹ for the perpetual comfort of the Church; but is there nothing of perpetual application in the promises made to the children of the saints? If there be such a restriction either in the letter or the spirit of the Scriptures, let it be shown. But if no such restriction can be shown, perish that unbelief which would "limit the holy one of Israel" in one of the sweetest promises of his grace, and would deprive the believer of one of the richest consolations of divine mercy and love.

Nor must we fail to insist on the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, on which our Church exclusively insists in her Baptismal Service, as the ground and warrant for the introduction of the Child to this initiatory rite. Indeed nothing more is requisite; for all the promises made to the children of believers receive their establish-

¹ Heb. xiii. 3.

ment and confirmation in the practice of him who gave them. We have here the promise acted out in practical blessedness by him, who alone can effectually accomplish it. For in that gospel, Mark x. 13. we have the express "words of our Saviour Christ ; he commanded the children to be brought unto him ; he blamed those that would have kept them from him ; he exhorted all men to follow their innocency. By his outward gesture and deed he declared his good will toward them ; for he embraced them in his arms, he laid his hands upon them, and blessed them." This was not a mere reception of kindness, the expression of natural affection in the Saviour, as it was expressed towards the young Ruler, of whom it is said that " Jesus seeing him loved him ; "¹ it was an expression of spiritual love ; for he not only " took them up in his arms," but he " put his hands upon them, and blessed them." Here was all the form of a spiritual blessing, the imposition of hands, as well as the blessing itself. And if children are capable of a blessing, when in the arms, and under the hands of Christ, are they less capable of a blessing, when, brought in faith to partake of his Sacrament of Initiation, he " receives " them " favourably," in the benign interpretation of our Church, and " embraces " them " with the arms of his mercy ? " And is it a

¹ Mark x. 21.

presumptuous intrusion on the riches of his grace towards them to assume "that he will give unto them the blessing of eternal life, and make them partakers of his everlasting kingdom?" Jesus put his hands upon the Infants, and blessed them; and are we justified in ascribing any lower meaning to the words, than that the blessing imparted spiritual virtue to their souls? It is surely the privilege of faith to give grace the largest credit, and to honor the words and actions of Christ with the most kindly interpretation of mercy. We may not only say then with Beza, "by what right or title do they refuse to give" children "the mark and ratification of that thing which they have and possess already, inasmuch as they have the seed and spring of faith in virtue of the promise which was received" by believing Parents? but we may say since Christ did actually "in the days of his flesh" impart grace to the souls of Infants by his blessing, by what right do we withhold the children of the faithful from similar blessings now? and if Jesus was "much displeased" when his disciples forbade them to come to him of old, is he less displeased with those whose unbelief forbids children to be partakers of similar blessings now? How grace can exist in the soul of an Infant, it is not within the limit of my faculties to comprehend, nor, as my finite powers are not submitted to such an obligation, am I concerned to com-

prehend it;¹ neither can I conceive how the soul of an Infant departed is capable of glory : and yet we all admit, and rejoice in the admission, that the souls of Infants departed, are thus highly privileged : and where is the consistency of admitting that the soul of an infant is capable of glory hereafter, and of denying that the same is capable of grace here ? for what is glory but consummate grace, and what is grace but maturing glory ? and the same divine power and love which appoint this incipient state of natural existence as a preparatory requisite to that of eternal duration, may in this incipient state of spiritual existence equally invest the soul of an infant with grace as a preparatory requisite to its perfection in immortal glory. That we cannot conceive it, is no just argument of its untruth ; we cannot conceive the principle of natural life, any more than we can conceive that of spiritual ; the difference is not in the fact but in our apprehension of it. The natural life of an infant is obvious to our senses, and therefore we believe it ; the spiritual life is submitted to our faith, and where no faith is, there can be no spiritual perception ; the faculty of such perception is wanting. But the strength or weakness of our faculties of apprehension

¹ The Scripture informs us that one of the same nature as ourselves was actually *gracious* even from his birth. It is said of John the Baptist “ and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb.” Luke i. 15.

makes no difference in the fact: “ though we believe not, yet he abideth faithful.”¹

While then we are warranted in trusting the promise, from the confidence that God, in pronouncing blessings on the faithful, would not exclude his choicest gifts, their children, from his grace—from the right of the believer to enjoy the promises made to the children of the faithful, as well as every other promise of the word intended for the perpetual consolation of the Church, and from the real accomplishment of these promises, by the actual extension of grace to Infants by the blessing of our Incarnate Saviour—let our confidence in the reality of these promises be confirmed by the known kindness of the Father of mercies to the helplessness and innocence of childhood. It is unnecessary to dwell on that kind consideration of their infant weakness which was a chief reason assigned for the preservation of Nineveh of old;² or on the assemblage of “ children and those that sucked the breasts” to observe the fast in the time of Joel.”³ If “ kings of the earth and all people, princes and judges, and young men, and maidens, and old men praise the Lord,” the chorus is incomplete if “ children” are wanting.⁴—We have already shown that under the old dispensation the es-

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 13.

² Joel ii. 16.

³ See Letter ii.

⁴ Psalm cxlviii. 11, 12.

pecial Sacrament of Circumcision was appointed to bestow more than temporal blessings ; and almost without controversy, during fifteen centuries of the new dispensation, the corresponding Sacrament of Baptism has been applied to the children of the faithful ; and to this hour, the propriety of such application has been questioned by a comparatively small part of the professing Christian world.—The word of God abounds as we have seen with gracious *promises* in favour of the children of believers, nor is it less abundant and particular in its *precepts* to “ train up a child in the way that he should go.”¹ The life of one holy child in Jeroboam’s family, suspended the judgments which were hanging over the royal house and over the nation at large. When the admirable greatness of “ the kingdom of heaven ” was to be illustrated, Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst,” and made him his text by which he exhibited the exquisite simplicity and characteristic humility of that greatness. Nor can I decline to insist on the important words which occur in that portion of Scripture. “ Whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. And whoso shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth

¹ Prov. xxii. 6.

of the sea.”¹ How forcible are these words both in warning and encouragement! First, how impressively do they warn us to beware of offending “these little ones that believe” in Christ, by abridging their privileges or excluding them from a benefit to which they have even *possibly* a claim! And now let all prejudice and affection be absent; may the Spirit of Christ endue our souls with simplicity and godly sincerity—and though we may hesitate to admit the full meaning which I have ascribed above to our Lord’s “blessing the children that were brought to him”—though we may hesitate to admit with Beza that children “have the spring and seed of faith in virtue of the promise received by their Parents,”—yet is there an unprejudiced mind endowed with the just exercise of reason, which looking simply at these accumulated evidences of God’s favor to children, especially to the children of the faithful, that can hesitate to say, “certainly these promises, and these evidences denote the favour of God to the children of believers: if these promises have any meaning, they express in terms, as plain as language can convey, the precious favour of God towards the children of the faithful.” If then we admit this gracious expression even in the lowest degree, and if there be any even

¹ Mat. xviii. 5, 6.

the lowest sense in which we can allow them to be partakers of grace, O let us tremble lest we “offend one of these little ones” by abridging him of one privilege which may *possibly* belong to him, by withholding him from the participation of blessings to which he is *possibly* entitled, and by excluding him from that character to which he may *possibly* have a claim, as “a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.” Rather let us take encouragement from the consideration that “whoso shall receive one such little child in the name” of Christ, receives the Saviour himself. Let the Church throw wide the arms of her benevolence, and receive every child presented to her in the name of Christ with affectionate readiness. Let Sponsors testify their love of Christ and immortal souls, by voluntarily engaging in the interesting work of training up a child for God according to the encouragement of the promise ; let them plead the promise in prayer; let them sedulously improve all the means of grace, that their charge “may be virtuously brought up to lead a godly and a Christian life”—and show me that man, who, upon his death-bed, though he should have witnessed no success in his labours, would repent, at that hour, that he had placed such confidence in the promise of a Covenant-God ; or that his prayers and vigilance and instruction had been unwarrantably

expended, or that his "labour," could such ever be the case, had been "in vain in the Lord."¹

Add to the above considerations the character of "the glorious Gospel of the Blessed God."² It is a dispensation of grace from beginning to end ; from its first origin in the love of God, before the world was, predestinating the soul to glory in Christ Jesus, through all its certain and gradual developement of mercy towards that soul, in its effectual calling, justification, adoption, sanctification, religious walk, and crowning glorification,—all is boundless love, unfathomable mercy, and "unsearchable" grace. And are not those who profess this blessed Gospel to exercise its characteristic spirit towards each other ? if there be a doubt upon this interesting subject, whether the promises of God do indeed embrace the children of believers, does not the spirit of love, and considerate kindness and condescending pity, which characterises the Gospel, enforce the adoption of the same heavenly spirit, in those who profess it, and compel us rather to give the benefit of the doubt in favour of mercy, than in favour of exclusion, and privation ? and if that lovely Charity which "believeth all things, and hopeth all things,"³ were standing at the door of the Congregation, and two believing Parents were

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 58. . . ² 1 Tim. i. 11.

³ 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

to offer her their Child for acceptance, that he might enjoy the seal of the promise, and the benefit of communion with the Church, could she send them away with this cheerless dismissal ? “ You have brought your child here upon the ground of the promise made to the children of believers ; but doubts are entertained whether such children have any just claim to so great a privilege ; to these doubts we give the most unfavourable interpretation ; we will receive you, but as to your child, we acknowledge no title that it can have to the blessings of grace : it has no covenant privileges ; the promises avail it nothing.” Rather would she not cast wide her arms, like the Saviour of old, and say, “ It is true, some entertain doubts as to the validity of the promises to the children of believing Parents, but the very nature of the Gospel of Grace compels us to give you the benefit of the doubt, and willingly to sink the scale in favour of your child. The promises are to you and your children, for they are “ to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call : ”¹ we trust that he now “ vouch-safes to call this child to the knowledge of his grace and faith in him,” enter—we accept him with joy, and cheerfully admit him to the communion of the Church.” How strikingly does want of faith annihilate love, and deprive the

¹ Acts ii. 39.

Gospel of its sweetest character ! Did the love of God and man glow in our hearts, as it did in the heart of him who came to save us, should we not labour to extend the meaning of the promise to its utmost bearing ? Should we not be desirous, that the faintest ray of grace should warm and enlighten our children ; and would not the great principle of their education be : “ See what God has done for you, O what should you not do for him in return ? Let the love of Christ constrain you, and as you are alive to God according to the promise, no longer live to yourself, “ but to him which died for ” you “ and rose again.”¹ I know not that language affords a happier expression to designate Infant-baptism, than that which is adopted by our Church ; it is God’s “ favourable allowance of a charitable work.” O wrong not his favor ; dishonour not his grace ; suspect not his faithfulness ; doubt not his love ; frustrate not his mercy : all this you do, if you hesitate to accept his promise. Believing Parents and Sponsors ! we call upon you to be consistent. How can you believe the Gospel and yet doubt one of its choicest promises ? why injure him in his tenderest part, the attribute of his mercy, who is the “ Father of the fatherless,”² and “ in whom the fatherless findeth mercy ? ”³ why injure his chiefest gift to you in providence, your other self,

¹ 2 Cor. v. 15.² Psalm lxviii. 5.³ Hos. xiv. 3..

the impress of your own image, the creature of your most cherished affections, by hesitating to apply to him the practical benefit of those promises which adopt him into the family of Christ, and by the daily application of which he is daily encouraged to that exercise of graces, discharge of duties, and enjoyment of privileges, which by evidencing the religion of Jesus to be a reality, evidence it to be a blessing also ; not an injunction harsh, repulsive and unattainable ; but the richest practical blessing the heart of man can enjoy, “ full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort.”¹

I should be disposed to apologise for thus gathering up the arrows of promise, and presenting them to your notice again, did not the importance of our subject imperatively demand this repetition. But the promises are my main battery, and what I am most concerned to render impregnable. It is here that my grand assailant Unbelief directs his most vigorous and most restless attacks. And though repeated foil frustrate each repeated attack, his assaults are not

¹ What a beautiful description do the following words give of the communion of the Primitive Church—“ And when we had accomplished those days (at Tyre) we departed and went our way ; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city : and we kneeled down on the shore and prayed.” Acts xxi. 5.—The communion would have failed of its full sympathy had the children of the Church been absent from this interesting group.

therefore the less determined or the less frequent. To speak plainly, though I have found opponents to be reduced to silence, I have not found them therefore to yield ; they have commonly said, “ Well, I cannot believe ; I cannot think that such blessed promises belong to us.” I will rein the question then within a short compass. Can it be denied that believing Parents have these promises ? If it can be so denied ; then deny against the plainest evidence of fact that they exist in Scripture ; or prove, that these promises, unlike their fellows, have no reference to us ; or expunge them from the sacred page : but consider the consequence : if you still persist in bringing up your children as Christians, you are acting without warrant, without encouragement, and therefore without any well-grounded prospect of success ; for if you have no promise ;—your faith has no foundation, your hope has no solid support, your expectation is presumption, and your anticipation delusion.

“ BELIEVE ” THEN, AND “ BE ESTABLISHED.”¹

Against this unyielding objection I have but one other arrow in my quiver ; and happily, that is of celestial temper, and is never known to fail.—Let us quit reasoning then for prayer.

“ Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
And lighten with celestial fire ;
Thou the anointing Spirit art,
Which dost thy seven-fold gifts impart :

¹ Isa. vii. 9.

OBJECTIONS STATED

Thy blessed Unction from above,
 Is comfort, life, and fire of love.
 Enable with perpetual light,
 The dulness of our blinded sight :
 Anoint and cheer our soiled face,
 With the abundance of thy grace."

"Lord be favourable to thy land, bring back the captivity of Jacob ; wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee ? Show us thy mercy O Lord, and grant us thy salvation."¹ We bless thee for the memorials of the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ in dying for us, and the innumerable benefits which by his precious blood-shedding he hath obtained to us : we bless thee that he hath instituted and ordained holy mysteries as pledges of his love, and for a continual remembrance of his death, to our great and endless comfort. O may we rightly understand, duly appreciate, and specially apply thy holy Sacraments to all the blessed purposes for which they were mercifully ordained. "Assure us thereby of thy favour and goodness towards us, and that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of thy Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people ; and are also heirs through hope of thy everlasting kingdom, by the merits of the most precious death and passion of thy dear Son. And we most humbly beseech thee, O heavenly Father, so to

¹ Psalm lxxxv.

assist us with thy grace, that we may continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in, through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end."

"THE PROMISE OF ETERNAL LIFE, IS THE SEED OF THE CHURCH OF GOD."¹

To attempt one spiritual act, except on this ground, is PRESUMPTION; not to expect the most consummate blessedness to flow from the confident application of the promise, is UNBELIEF.

¹ Hooker, b. v. s. 63.

LETTER VII.

SENTIMENTS OF THE REFORMERS.

BUT it is highly important to ascertain whether this view of the subject of Baptism, and the interpretation given above be confirmed by the Reformers. It will therefore be my object in this chapter, with the blessing of God, first, to show the concurrent testimony of our own Reformers, on this subject; and then to establish this by the united voice of the Churches of the Reformed. And as it appears to me, the result of the following extracts may be expressed in the opening words of King Edward the Sixth's Catechism. "It is the duty of them all, whom Christ hath redeemed by his death, that they not only be servants to obey, but also children to inherit." "To obey" is the duty of an inferior, "to inherit" is the privilege of a child: and it is that discharge of duty which is the rich privilege of holiness, that is the characteristic feature of the Gospel. Into this it will be seen that the Child of the believer is admitted at his Baptism.

TINDAL, Martyr.

“ And to know how contrary this law is unto our nature, and how it is damnation not to have this law written in our hearts, though we never commit the deeds : and how there is no other means to be saved from this damnation than through repentance toward the law, and faith in Christ’s blood, which are the very inward baptism of our souls, and the washing and the dipping of our bodies in the water is the outward sign. The plunging of the body under the water signifieth that we repent and profess to fight against sin and lusts, and to kill them every day more and more, with the help of God, and our diligence in following the doctrine of Christ, and the leading of his spirit, and that we believe to be washed from our natural damnation in which we are born, and from all the wrath of the law, and from all the infirmities and weaknesses that remain in us, after we have given our consent unto the law, and yielded ourselves to be scholars thereof, and from all the imperfection of all our deeds done with cold love, and from all actual sin, which shall chance on us while we enforce the contrary, and ever fight there against, and hope to sin no more. And thus repentance and faith begin at our baptism and first professing the laws of God, and continue unto our lives end, and grow as we grow in the Spirit. For the perfecter we be, the

greater is our repentance, and the stronger our faith. And thus as the Spirit and doctrine on God's part, and repentance and faith on our part beget us anew in Christ : even so they make us grow and wax perfect, and save us unto the end, and never leave us until all sin he put off, and we clean purified, and full formed and fashioned after the similitude and likeness of the perfectness of our Saviour Jesus, whose gift all is."

—" But when we believe in God, and then do all that is in our might, and not tempt him, then is God true to abide by his promise, and to help us, and perform alone, when our strength is past."—" And therefore, because we be never taught the profession of our baptism we remain always unlearned, as well the spirituality, for all their great clergy and high schools, as we say, as the lay people. And now because the lay and unlearned people are taught these first principles of our profession, therefore they read the Scripture, and understand and delight therein."¹
—" Yet there is sin remaining in us, but it is not reckoned, because of faith and of the Spirit, which fight against it : wherefore we have enough to do all our lives long to tame our bodies, and to compel the members to obey the Spirit and not the appetites : that thereby we might be like unto Christ's death and resurrection, and might fulfil our baptism, which signi-

¹ Fathers of the English Church, vol. i. pp. 31—33.

fieth the mortifying of sins, and the new life of grace. For this battle ceaseth not in us, until the last breath, and until that sin be utterly slain by the death of the body.”¹

“ The faith of a repentant soul in Christ’s blood doth justify only, and the sacrament standeth in as good stead as a lively preacher; and as the preacher justifieth me not, but my faith in the doctrine: even so the sign justifieth not, but the faith in the promise which the sacrament signifieth and preacheth. And to preach is all the virtue of the sacrament; and where the sacraments preach not, there they have no virtue at all. And, sir, we teach not as ye do, to believe in the sacrament *or* in the holy church, but to believe the sacrament *and* holy church.”²

FRITH, *Martyr.*

“ This outward *sign* doth neither give us the Spirit of God, neither yet grace, that is, the favour of God. For if through the washing in the water, the spirit of grace were given, then should it follow, that whosoever were baptized in water should receive this precious gift; but that is not so, wherefore I must needs conclude, that this outward sign, by any power or influence that it hath, bringeth not the spirit or favour of God.—Moreover if the Spirit of God

¹ Fathers, &c. vol. i. p. 61.

² Ibid, vol. i. p. 277.

and his grace were bound unto the sacraments, then where the sacraments were ministered, there must the spirit of grace wait on ; and where they were not ministered should be neither spirit nor grace. But that is false, for Cornelius and all his household, received the Holy Ghost before they were baptized.—Here may we see, that as the Spirit of God lighteth where he will, neither is he bound to any thing. Yea, and this example doth well declare unto us, that the sacraments are given, to be an outward witness unto all the congregation of that grace, which is given before privately unto every man.

“ So, is baptism given before the congregation unto him, which before he receive it, hath either professed the religion of Christ, or else hath the word of promise, by the which promise he is known to be of the sensible congregation of Christ ; and for this cause, when we baptize one, that is come unto the age of discretion, we ask of him whether he believe : if he answer, yea, and desire baptism, then is he baptized, so that we require faith in him before he be baptized, (which is the gift of God) and cometh of grace, and so it is an outward sign of his invisible faith, which before was given him of God. If an infant be brought unto baptism, whom his friends offer up willingly, to sanctify and fulfil the commandment and ordinance of God, we inquire of his friends before the congregation,

whether they will that their child be baptized; and when they have answered, yea, then receiveth he baptism. Here also went before the promise of God, that he of his grace reputeth our infants, no less of the congregation, than the infants of the Hebrews, *and through baptism doth the congregation receive him, which was first received through grace of the promise.* Thus may we see that baptism bringeth not grace, but doth testify unto the congregation, that he which is baptized, had such grace given him before; so is baptism a sacrament, that is the sign of an holy thing, even a token of the grace and free mercy, which was before given him; a visible example of invisible grace, which is done and given through the gentleness of God.”¹

—“ Our judgment recounteth all faithful and chosen, that seem to be; but Christ knoweth them that are his, and them that shall forsake him.”²

“ Now have we expounded the signification of baptism, which signification we may obtain only by faith, for if thou be baptized a thousand times with water, and have no faith, it availeth thee no more towards God, than it doth a goose, when she ducketh herself under the water. Therefore if thou wilt obtain the profit of baptism, thou must have faith; that is, thou must be surely persuaded that thou art newly born again, not by water only, but by water and the

¹ Fathers, &c. vol. i. pp. 384—386.

² Ibid. vol. i. p. 388.

Holy Ghost; and that thou art become the child of God, and that thy sins are not imputed to thee, but forgiven through the blood and passion of Christ, according unto the promise of God. This faith have neither the devils, neither yet the wicked. For the wicked cannot believe the remission of their sins, but fall unto utter desperation, and make God a liar, as much as in them is.—And the devils cannot believe it, for they have no promise made unto them.”¹

But I refer the Reader to the “Treatise on Baptism,” from whence the above extracts are taken, the whole of which is well worth his perusal.

LANCELOT RIDLEY.

“Here is shewed, how Christ hath purged his church truly in the fountain of water, by his word. Although God of his mere mercy and goodness, without all man’s deserts, or merits, only for Christ’s sake, hath washed and purged man from sin: yet he useth a mean, by the which he cleanseth men from sin, which is by baptism in water by the word of God; and so in baptism are our sins taken away, and we from sins purged, cleansed, and regenerated in a new man, to live an holy life, according to the Spirit and will of God. It is not the water that washes us from our sins; but Christ by his word and

¹ Fathers, &c. vol. i. p. 391.

his Spirit, given to us in baptism, that washeth away our sins, that we have of Adam by carnal nature.

—“If we be Christian men, our office is to bring every man, as much as in us is, to Christ, and that sinners may be cleansed from their sin, and be saved.”¹

CRANMER, *Archbishop, and Martyr.*

That children baptized, should believe themselves to be indeed “members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven,” is the very spirit that pervades the long catechism expressly provided by the Archbishop for the use of children.

“Wherefore, good children, believe ye with all your heart in this Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, our Lord, and doubt not but that he hath suffered for our sins, and contented the justice of his Father for the same, and hath brought us again unto his favour, and made us his well-beloved children, and heirs of his kingdom. And when you be asked, How understand you the second part of the Creed? You shall answer, I believe that Jesus Christ, very God, begotten of God the Father, and very man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, which by his precious blood and holy passion hath redeemed me a miserable and damned

¹ Fathers, &c. vol. ii. p. 135.

wretch from all my sins, from death eternal, and from the tyranny of the devil, that I should be his own true subject, and live within his kingdom, and serve him in a new and everlasting life and justice, even as our Lord Christ after he rose from death to life, liveth and reigneth everlastingly.”¹

“ Wherefore, good children, mark well this lesson, that when ye be demanded, How understand you the third part of the Creed? Ye may answer thus: I believe that neither by man’s strength, power, nor wisdom, neither by mine own endeavour, nor compass of mine own reason, I am able to believe in Jesus Christ, or to come unto him. But the Holy Ghost did call me by the word of the Gospel, and with the gifts of his grace he hath hitherto endowed me and hallowed me, and in the true faith he hath hitherto preserved and confirmed me: and this he hath not done only to me, but also he calleth and gathereth together, in the unity of one faith and one baptism, all the universal church that is here in earth, and he halloweth, keepeth and preserveth the same in the true knowledge of Christ, and faith in his promises. And in this Church he giveth free and general pardon to me, and to all that believe in him, of all our sins, offences, and trespasses; and at the last day he shall raise me, and all others that be

¹ Fathers, &c. vol. iii. p. 229.

dead, and all that died in the true faith of Jesus Christ he shall glorify in the life everlasting. Therefore to the said Holy Ghost that sanctifieth us, with the Father that made and created us, and the Son that redeemed us, be given all honour and glory world without end. Amen.”¹

“ Before I told you, good children, that we go not before God : we pray not first that God will be our God and our Father : but God of his inestimable mercy doth prevent us, doth call us by his word, doth call us unto faith, doth give us his Spirit, to know him for our Father and Lord, before we could think thereof and seek for God. But now, seeing that by his word and faith he hath called us, and by baptism hath grafted us in Christ, and made us members of his church, we ought not to be slothful nor idle, but study to go forward and increase in godliness, and to pray thus, “ Our Father which art in heaven ; ” for as much as thou hast given unto us, being unworthy, thy holy Gospel, and hast chosen us, and not we thee ; and seeing that thou hast sent unto us preachers, which teach unto us thy word, whereby we be sanctified and instructed in the faith, so that now we may know thee for God, and partly fulfil the first commandment : now fulfil, O Father, that thou hast begun, proceed to help us, that we may fulfil the second commandment ; that is, that thy name may be

¹ Fathers, &c. v. iii. p. 239.

hallowed, that is to say, may be honoured as holy. This prayer pleaseth God, and he heareth it, and God giveth us grace and strength that we may hallow his name.”¹

“ Hitherto you have heard what we promise to God when we are baptised. Now learn also, I pray you, what God worketh in us by baptism, and what benefits he giveth us in the same. For baptism is not water alone, and nothing else besides, but it is the water of God, and hath his strength by the word of God, and is a seal of God’s promise. Wherefore it doth work in us all those things whereunto God hath ordained it. For our Lord Jesus Christ saith, “ Go and teach all nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.” This God commanded his disciples to do. Wherefore by the virtue of this commandment which came from heaven, even from the bosom of God, baptism doth work in us, as the work of God. For when we be baptized in the name of God, that is as much to say, as God himself should baptize us. Wherefore we ought not to have an eye only to the water, but to God rather, which did ordain the baptism of water, and commanded it to be done in his name. For he is Almighty, and able to work in us by baptism forgiveness of our sins, and all those wonderful effects and operations for

¹ Fathers, &c. v. iii. p. 247, 248.

the which he hath ordained the same, although man's reason is not able to conceive the same.”

“Therefore, consider, good children, the great treasures and benefits whereof God maketh us partakers when we are baptized, which be these. The first is, that in baptism our sins be forgiven us.—The second is, that the Holy Ghost is given us, the which doth spread abroad the love of God in our heart.—The third is, that by baptism the whole righteousness of Christ is given unto us, that we may claim the same as our own.—Fourthly, by baptism we die with Christ, and are buried, (as it were) in his blood and death, that we should suffer afflictions and death, as Christ himself hath suffered.—By this which I have hitherto spoken, I trust you understand, good children, wherefore baptism is called the bath of regeneration, and how in baptism we be born again, and be made new creatures in Christ.”¹

PHILPOT, *Archdeacon and Martyr.*

The whole of the letter, from which the following extracts are taken, is well worth the perusal.

“But the catholic truth delivered unto us by the Scripture, plainly determineth, that all such

¹ Fathers, &c. v. iii. p. 295—297.

are to be baptized as whom God acknowledgeth for his people, and voucheth them worthy of sanctification or remission of their sins. Therefore, since that infants be in the number or scroll of God's people, and be partakers of the promise by their purification in Christ, it must needs follow thereby that they ought to be baptized, as well as those that can profess their faith. For we judge the people of God as well by the free and liberal promise of God, as by the confession of faith. For to whomsoever God promiseth himself to be their God, and whom he acknowledgeth for his, those no man without impiety may exclude from the number of the faithful. But God promiseth that he will not only be the God of such as do profess him, but also of infants, promising them his grace and remission of sins, as it appeareth by the words of the covenant made unto Abraham : " I will set my covenant between thee and me (saith the Lord) and between thy seed after thee in thy generations, with an everlasting covenant, to be thy God, and the God of thy seed after thee." To the which covenant circumcision was added, to be a sign of sanctification, as well in children as in men : and no man may think that this promise is abrogated with circumcision and other ceremonial laws. For Christ came to fulfil the promises, and not to dissolve them. Therefore in the Gospel he saith of infants,

that is, of such as yet believed not ; Let the little ones come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”¹

“ After this will I answer to the sum of your arguments for the contrary. The first, which includeth all the rest, is, it is written ; ‘ Go ye into all the world, and preach the glad tidings to all creatures. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved : but he that believeth not shall be damned.’ ”

“ To this I answer, that nothing is added to God’s word by baptism of children, as you pretend, but that is done which the same word doth require, for that children are accounted of Christ in the Gospel among the number of such as believe, as it appeareth by these words ; “ He that offendeth one of these little babes which believe in me, it were better for him to have a mill-stone tied about his neck, and to be cast into the bottom of the sea.” Where plainly Christ calleth such as be not able to confess their faith, believers, because of his mere grace he reputeth them for believers. And this is no wonder so to be taken, since God imputeth faith for righteousness unto men that be of riper age : for both in men and children righteousness, acceptation, or sanctification, is of mere grace and by imputation, that the glory of God’s grace might be praised.”

¹ Fathers, &c. vol. iv. pp. 537, 538.

“ And that the children of faithful parents are sanctified, and among such as do believe is apparent in the 1 Cor. vii. &c.¹ ”

“ The Lord sent his apostles, at the beginning of the setting up his true religion, unto all nations, unto such as were ignorant of God, and were out of the covenant of God; and truly such persons it behoveth not first to be baptised, and afterwards taught; but first to be taught, and after baptised. If at this day we should go to the Turks to convert them to the faith of Christ, verily first we ought to teach them, and afterwards baptise such as would yield to be the servants of Christ. Likewise the Lord himself in times past did, when first he renewed the covenant with Abraham, and ordained circumcision to be a seal of the covenant, after that Abraham was circumcised. But he, when he perceived the infants also to pertain to the covenant, and that circumcision was the sealing up of the covenant, did not only circumcise Ishmael, his son, that was thirteen years of age, but all other infants that were born in his house, among whom we reckon Isaac.

“ Even so faithful people which were converted from heathen idolatry by the preaching of the Gospel, and confessing their faith, were baptised; when they understood their children to be counted among the people of God, and that

¹ Fathers, &c. vol. iv. p. 543.

baptism was the token of the people of God, they procured also their children to be baptised. Therefore as it is written, “Abraham circumcised all the male children of his house.” Sem-blably we read in the Acts and the writings of the apostles, that after the master of the house was turned to the faith, all the whole house was baptised. And as concerning those which of old time were compelled to confess their faith before they received baptism, which were called cate-chumens, they were such as with our forefathers came from the Gentiles to the church, who being yet rude of faith, they did instruct in the principles of their belief, and afterward they did baptise them; but the same ancient fathers notwithstanding did baptise the children of faithful men, as I have already partly declared.”¹

HOOPER, Bishop and Martyr.

“This new life cometh not, until such time as Christ be known and received. Now to put on Christ, is to live a new life. Such, as be baptised, must remember that repentance and faith precede this external sign, and in Christ the purgation was inwardly obtained, before the external sign was given. So that there are two kinds of baptism, and both necessary. The one interior, which is the cleansing of the heart, the drawing of the Father, the

¹ Fathers, &c. vol. iv. pp. 545, 546.

operation of the Holy Ghost, and this baptism is in man, when he believeth and trusteth that Christ is the only actor of his salvation. Thus be the infants examined¹ concerning repentance and faith, before they be baptised with water : at the contemplation of the which faith God purgeth the soul. Then is the exterior sign and deed not to purge the heart, but to confirm, manifest, and open unto the world, that this child is God's.

“ And likewise baptism with the repetition of the words is a very sacrament and sign, that the baptised creature should die from sin all his life, as Paul writeth. (Rom. vi.) Likewise no man should condemn nor neglect this exterior sign, for the commandments' sake ; though it have no power to purge from sin, yet it confirmeth the purgation of sin, and the act of itself pleaseth God, because the receivers thereof obey the will of his commandment.”

—“ Thus assured of God, and cleansed from sin in Christ, he hath the livery of God given unto him, *baptism*, the which no Christian should neglect ; and yet not attribute his sanctification unto the external sign. As the king's majesty may not attribute his right unto the crown, but unto God and unto his Father, who hath not only given him grace to be born into the world, but also to govern as a king in the world ;

¹ Viz. through their Sponsors.

whose right and title the crown confirmeth and sheweth the same unto all the world. Whereas this right by God and natural succession precedeth the coronation, the ceremony availeth nothing. A traitor may receive the crown, and yet be true king nothing the more. So an hypocrite and infidel may receive the external sign of baptism, and yet be no Christian man any the more, as Simon Magus and others.”¹

BRADFORD, *Prebendary and Martyr.*

“ For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled unto thee by the death of thy Son, much more we, being reconciled shall be saved by his life. (Rom. v.) And that I should not doubt hereof, but certainly be persuaded all things to pertain to me, where I might have been born of Turks, lo ! thou wouldest I should be born of Christian parents, brought into thy church by baptism, which is the sacrament of adoption, and requireth faith as well of remission of my sins as of sanctification and holiness, to be wrought of thee in me by thy grace and holy Spirit.—For in that thou hast given to me this benefit to be thy child, undeserved, undesired on my behalf, simply and only in respect of thine own goodness and grace in Christ, lest at any time I should doubt of it, how should I but hope certainly that nothing profitable to

¹ Fathers, &c. vol. v. pp. 169—171.

me can be denied, in that thy power is infinite ? For as thy good will is declared in adopting me, so nothing can be finally wanting me which may make for my weal (for that should improve [*disprove*] thy power to be almighty) in that thy will is so bounteously already declared ; whereas my belief requireth to believe in thee the Father Almighty ; in consideration whereof I should in all things behave myself as a child, rejoice in thee, praise thee, trust in thee, fear thee, serve thee, love thee, call upon thee, &c. But alas ! how heavy hearted am I ! how unthankful am I ! how full of unbelief and doubting of this thy rich mercy ! how little do I love thee, fear thee, call upon thee, &c. Oh ! be merciful unto me, forgive me, good Father, for thine own sake, and grant me the Spirit of thy children, to reveal thyself unto me, and Jesus Christ thy dear Son our Lord, by whom we are made thy children, that I may truly know thee, heartily love thee, faithfully hang upon thee in all my needs, with good hope call upon thee, render faithfully this honour to thee that thou art my God and Father, and I thy dear child, through thy grace in Christ, and so always be endued with an assured hope of thy goodness, and a faithful, obedient heart in all things to thy holy will. At thy hands, and from thee, as I must look for all things, so come I unto thee, and pray thee to give me those things which thy dear children have, and thou requirest of me,

that I might come and ask them of thee, as now. I do through Jesus Christ our Lord.”¹

“ Not only this, but also thou wouldest that I should know and believe, that by the same thy dearly beloved Son thou hast brought me from the tyranny and captivity of Satan and this sinful world, (whereof the captivity of Egypt under Pharaoh was a figure) and in his blood shed upon the cross thou hast made a covenant with me, which thou wilt never forget, that thou art and wilt be my Lord and my God: that is, thou wilt forgive me my sins and be wholly mine, with all thy power, wisdom, righteousness, truth, glory and mercy; wherefore, although I might confirm my faith by the innumerable mercies hitherto poured upon me most abundantly, as thy children of Israel might have done, and did confirm their faith by the manifold benefits poured upon them in the desert: yet specially the seal of thy covenant, I mean thy holy sacrament of baptism, wherein thy holy name was not in vain called upon me (O dear Father, sweet Son and Saviour Jesus Christ, and most gracious good Holy Ghost) should most assuredly confirm, and even on all sides seal up my faith of this covenant, that thou art my Lord and my God; even as Abraham and thy people of Israel did by the sacrament of circumcision, which as the Apostle calleth the seal or signal of

¹ Fathers, &c. vol. vi. pp. 238, 239.

righteousness, so dost thou call it; being but the sign of thy covenant indeed, yet thy very covenant; because as thy word is most true and cannot lie, as thy covenant is a covenant of peace infallible and everlasting; even so the sacrament and seal of the same is a most true testimonial and witness thereof.”¹

“ Now to the question: a man regenerate (which we ought to believe of ourselves, I mean that we are so by our baptism, the sacrament thereof requiring no less faith); a man, I say, regenerate, that is born of God, hath the Spirit of God: and as a man born of flesh and blood hath the spirit thereof, whereby as he can stir up himself to do more and more the deeds of the flesh, so the other can, by the Spirit of God in him, stir up in himself the gifts and graces of God, to glorify God accordingly.”²

“ As I would have us often to muse upon the catholic church or communion of saints (whereof we may not doubt, in what state soever we be, under pain of damnation, being baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost) so would I have us to meditate upon the other articles following, that is, remission of sins, resurrection of the flesh, and life everlasting. It is an article of our faith to believe, that is, to be certain that our sins are pardoned; therefore doubt not thereof lest thou become an infidel.

¹ Fathers, &c. vol. vi. pp. 273—274. ² Ibid, vol. vi. p. 390.

Though thou have sinned never so sore, yet now despair not, but be certain that God is thy God, that is, that he forgiveth thee thy sin.”¹

JEWELL, Bishop.

“ As princes’ seals confirm and warrant their deeds and charters, so do the sacraments witness unto our conscience, that God’s promises are true, and shall continue for ever. Thus doth God make known his secret purpose to his church ; first he declareth his mercy by his word, then he sealeth it, and assureth it by his sacraments. In this word we have his promises ; in the sacraments we see them.”²

“ Chrysostom saith, “ Christ’s baptism is Christ’s passion.” They are not bare signs ; it were blasphemy so to say ; the grace of God doth always work with his sacraments ; but we are taught not to seek that grace in the sign, but to assure ourselves by receiving the sign, that it is given us by the thing signified. We are not washed from our sins by the water, we are not fed to eternal life by the bread and wine, but by the precious blood of our Saviour Christ, that lieth hid in these sacraments.”³

“ Such a change is made in the sacrament of baptism : through the power of God’s working, the water is turned into blood ; they that be

¹ Fathers, &c. vol. vi. p. 415.

² Ibid, vol. vii. p. 483.

³ Ibid, pp. 488, 489.

washed in it receive the remission of sins ; their robes are made clean in the blood of the lamb. The water itself is nothing ; but by the working of God's Spirit, the death and merits of our Lord and Saviour Christ, are thereby assured unto us.”¹

“ Our children are the children of God ; he is our God, and the God of our seed ; they be under the covenant with us.”²

“ By these few it may appear, that the Sacrament maketh not a Christian, but is a seal and assurance unto all that receive it of the grace of God, unless they make themselves unworthy thereof, and that no man may despise this holy ordinance, and keep back his infants from baptism, for in so doing he procureth his own damnation.”³

“ Therefore a father must teach his child what God is ; that he is our Father, that he hath made us, and doth feed us, and giveth us all things needful both for body and soul ? that he is our Lord and therefore we must serve him, and obey him, and do nothing whereby he may be displeased ; that he is our judge, and shall come to judge the quick and the dead ; and that all men shall come before him, to receive according as they have done in the flesh.

“ He must put his child in mind of his baptism, and teach him that it is a covenant of God's

¹ Ibid, p. 497.

² Ibid, p. 499.

³ Ibid, p. 500.

mercy to us, and of our duty to God : that it is a mystery of our salvation, that our soul is so washed with the blood of Christ, as the water of baptism washeth our body.”¹

And commenting on St. Paul’s words (1 Cor. vii.) “Now are your children holy,” he says, “his meaning is, that the children of the faithful, notwithstanding by nature they be the children of anger, yet by God’s free election they be pure and holy.”²

Nowell’s Catechism.

“*Master.*—Do all generally, and without difference receive this grace ?

Scholar.—The only faithful receive this fruit, but the unbelieving in refusing the promises offered them by God, shut up the entry against themselves, and go away empty. Yet do they not thereby make that the Sacraments lose their force and nature.

Master.—Tell me then briefly in what things the use of baptism consisteth ?

Scholar.—In faith and repentance. For first, we must with assured confidence hold it determined in our hearts, that we are cleansed by the blood of Christ from all filthiness of sin, and so be acceptable to God, and that his Spirit dwelleth within us. And then we must continually with all our power and endeavour, travail in mortify-

¹ Ibid, p. 540.

² Fathers, &c. vol. vii. p. 683.

ing our flesh, and obeying the righteousness of God, and must by godly life declare to all men that we have in baptism, as it were, put on Christ, and have his Spirit given us.

Master.—Sith infants cannot by age perform those things that thou speakest of, why are they baptized?

Scholar.—That faith and repentance go before baptism, is required only in persons so grown in years, that by age they are capable of both. But to infants, the promise made to the church by Christ, in whose faith they are baptized, shall for the present time be sufficient; and then afterward, when they are grown to years, they must need themselves acknowledge the truth of their baptism, and have the force thereof be lively in their souls, and to be represented in their life and behaviour.”¹

After adopting the first part of that beautiful extract from King Edward’s Catechism, given at p. 131. The SCHOLAR proceeds nearly in the same terms; “They that be steadfast, stable, and constant in this faith, were chosen and appointed, and (as we term it) predestinated to this so great felicity, before the foundations of the world were laid, whereof they have a witness within them in their souls, the Spirit of Christ the author, and therewith also the most sure pledge of this confidence.” To which the Scholar adds this application of the doctrine to

¹ Fathers, &c. vol. viii. pp. 126, 127.

himself. “ By the instinct of which divine Spirit, I do also most surely persuade myself that I am also, by God’s good gift through Christ, freely made one of this blessed city.”

*Master.—It is sure a godly and very necessary persuasion.*¹

The two following extracts are taken from certain “ *Prefaces, Prayers, and other Godly Tracts, printed in various editions of the Geneva Bible, the Book of Common Prayer, and the Psalter, during the reign of QUEEN ELIZABETH.*”

“ *Question.—How doth the word of God serve to draw men unto him !*

Answer.—When it is so preached and heard, that men may understand and learn what God teacheth, accept and receive thankfully that which is thereby given, promised, and assured; and be moved with desire and diligence to do that which it commandeth.

Question.—Do the sacraments also serve to this end ?

Answer.—Yea, verily; that by sight, taste, and feeling, as well as by hearing, we might be instructed, assured, and brought to obedience.

Question.—How doth our baptism serve hereunto ?

Answer.—It teacheth us to put on Christ, that with his righteousness our sinfulness may be

¹ Fathers, &c. pp. 79, 80.

hidden ; it assureth us that we are so graft into Christ, that all our sins by him are washed away : it chargeth us to die to sin, to continue in the profession of Christ, and to love each other.

Question.—Hath the Lord's supper also this use ?

Answer.—Yea, doubtless ; for it teacheth that the body and blood of Christ crucified is the only food of the new-born children of God ; it assureth that Christ is wholly theirs, to give and to continue life spiritual and heavenly to both body and soul, to nourish, strengthen, refresh, and to make cheerful the hearts of the elect, it requireth thankful remembrance of the death of Christ, unity among those that do profess him, with a free profession of his truth.

Question.—Why is not this use of the Sacra-
ments commonly known ?

Answer.—Because they are abused for form, for fashion, for custom, and company, without regard unto the word, whereunto they are so annexed, that they ought not upon any necessity by any person be severed from it, which teacheth the right use of every thing.”¹

PETER MARTYR, *Professor of Divinity at Oxford.*

“ Note here that the Fathers made a league

¹ Fathers, &c. vol. viii. p. 203, 204.

with God, not only for themselves but also for their posterity, as God again for his part promised them, that he would be the God not only of them, but also of their seed and posterity; wherefore it was lawful for them to circumcise their children, being yet infants. And in like manner, it is lawful for us to baptise our little ones, being yet infants, forasmuch also as they are comprehended in the league. For they which have now the thing itself, there is nothing that can let, but that they may receive the sign: it is manifestly written in xxix. chap. of Deut. that the league was made not only with them which was present, but also with them which was absent and not yet born."—On Judges. fol. 75. ¹

The attentive Reader cannot but be struck with the general consistency of the doctrine of Baptism as represented in the foregoing extracts, with that expressed in our Baptismal service and its kindred formularies. The Child is a child of God in virtue of the promise to his faithful Parents; as such he receives the sign of the covenant in Baptism; and he is urged to a holy life in consistency with his profession; not in his own strength, but as "a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven."

¹ See "Marbeck's Common Places," under the head "Baptism."

These sentiments of our Forefathers of the Reformation respecting Baptism, will receive ample confirmation from the concurrent sentiments of the Reformed Churches throughout Christendom in their day. I extract the following testimonies from “ An Harmony of the Confessions of the faith of the Christian and Reformed Churches which purelie professe the holie doctrine of the Gospell in all the chiefe Kingdomes, Nations, and Provinces of Europe,—allowed by publique authoritie,” and “ imprinted by Thomas Thomas, printer to the Universitie of Cambridge, 1586.’ And should these testimonies not be deemed sufficient, I must refer to the “ Corpus Confessionum ” for any further evidence that may be required.

The latter Confession of Helvetia.

“ There is but one baptism in the church of God: for it is sufficient to be once baptized or consecrated unto God. For baptism once received doth continue all a man’s life, and is a perpetual sealing of our adoption unto us. For to be baptized in the name of Christ, is to be enrolled, entered, and received into the covenant, and family, and so into the inheritance of the sons of God, yea and in this life to be called after the name of God, that is to say, to be called the son of God, to be purged also from the filthi-

¹ Fathers, &c. p. 395 and the following.

ness of sins, and to be indued with the manifold grace of God, for to lead a new and innocent life. Baptism therefore doth call to mind, and keep in remembrance the great benefit of God performed to mankind, for we are all born in the pollution of sin and are the sons of wrath. But God who is rich in mercy, doth freely purge us from our sins by the blood of his Son, and in him doth adopt us to be his sons, and by an holy covenant doth join us to himself, and doth enrich us with divers gifts, that we might live a new life. All these things are sealed up unto us in baptism.

“ We condemn the Anabaptists who deny that young infants born of faithful parents, are to be baptized. For according to the doctrine of the gospel “ this is the kingdom of God.” And they are written in the covenant of God. And why then should not the sign of the covenant be given to them? Why should they not be consecrated by holy baptism, who are God’s peculiar people, and in the Church of God ? ”

The former Confession of Helvetia.

“ Baptism, according to the institution of the Lord, is the font of Regeneration, the which the Lord doth give to his chosen in a visible sign, by the ministry of the Church in such sort, as we have declared before. In which holy font we do therefore dip our infants, because that it is not lawful for us to reject them from the com-

pany of the people of God, which are born of us, (who are the people of God) so long as they be not pointed out by the voice of God, especially seeing that we ought godly to presume of their election."

The Confession of Bohemia.

" For we believe that whatsoever by baptism, as by a Sacrament added to the word of the gospel, is in the outward ceremony signified and witnessed, all that doth the Lord God work and perform inwardly : that is that he washeth away sin, begetteth a man again, and bestoweth salvation upon him, and through the washing of water cleanseth by the word the society of his Church, cloatheth and appareleth it with his Son, burieth and taketh away sin, and giveth testimony to, and sealeth the peace of a good conscience, &c.

" And although Baptism in the primitive Church was for the most part ministered to such, as were well grown and of discretion, after a confession of faith made by them, according to Christ's commandment ; yet this is taught, that young children also, who are reckoned in the number of God's people, in like sort are by this ministry to be benefitted toward the attaining of salvation, that they likewise may be consecrated and dedicated to Christ, according to this commandment, when he saith, " Suffer ye the little ones to come to me, and forbid them

not : because unto such belongeth the kingdom of God." Therefore according to the word of the Lord, and many other testimonies and other promises made to this beloved age of children, especially when as also there is extant an example of that ancient ministry ordained of God, to wit, circumcision, which by the covenant belonged not only to those of discretion, but therewithal also to young children. For these causes do our ministers without any doubt and boldly baptize children in the name of the Holy Trinity, applying unto them a sign of most effectual virtue, and a most sure witness-bearing of that thing which by Christ's own words is assigned to this age, and is imparted unto it. For so Christ in general, and without exception giveth in charge, not touching some, but touching all, "Teach ye all nations, and baptize them, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." And so over children this most holy name is called upon, in which alone there is salvation."

The French Confession.

"Furthermore, although Baptism be a Sacrament of faith and repentance, yet seeing that God doth together with the parents account their posterity also to be of the Church, we affirm, that infants, being born of holy Parents, are by the authority of Christ to be baptized.

"We say therefore that the element of water,

be it never so frail, doth notwithstanding truly witness or confirm unto us the inward washing of our souls in the blood of Jesus Christ, by the virtue and efficacy of the Holy Ghost."

The Confession of Belgia.

"Neither doth this baptism profit us only at that moment when the water resteth upon us, and when we are sprinkled with it, but it is available throughout the whole time of our life. Therefore here we do detest the error of the Anabaptists, who are not only content with one only baptism, and that once received, but do also condemn the baptism of infants, yea of those that be born of faithful Parents: but we by the same reason do believe that they ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant, for the which in time past the infants amongst the Israelites were circumcised, that is, by reason of the same promises made unto our infants, that were made unto others. And verily Christ hath no less shed his blood to wash the infants of the faithful, than he did for the washing of those that are of riper years. Therefore it is meet that they should receive the sign or sacrament of the thing which Christ hath wrought for their sakes, as in the law the Lord commandeth, that the sacrament of the death and passion of Christ should be communicated to children new born, by offering up the lamb for them which was a sacrament of Christ to

come. (Levit. xii. 6.) Furthermore that which circumcision did perform to the people of the Jews, the same did baptism perform to the children of the faithful. For the which cause Paul calleth Baptism, “the circumcision of Christ.”

The Confession of Augsburgh.

“Concerning baptism they teach that it is necessary to salvation, as a ceremony ordained of Christ. Also that by baptism the grace of God is offered. And that young infants are to be baptized, and that they being by baptism commended unto God, are received into God’s favour, and are made the sons of God as Christ witnesseth, speaking of little children in the Church, (Matt. xviii.) “It is not the will of your heavenly Father, that any of these little ones should perish.” They condemn the Anabaptists, which allow not the baptism of infants, and hold that infants are saved, though they die without baptism, and be not within the Church of God.”

The Confession of Saxony.

“We do also baptise infants, because it is most certain that the promise of grace doth pertain also of (to) infants, and to those only which are ingrafted into the Church, because that of these it is said, “Suffer little ones to come unto me, because that to such appertaineth the kingdom of heaven.” And Origen

writeth upon the sixth to the Romans, “ That the Church received the custom of baptising infants from the apostles.” Neither do we think that this custom is only an idle ceremony, but that the infants are then indeed received and sanctified of God, because that then they are grafted into the Church, and the promise pertaineth to such. And of this matter there be many things written and published in our Churches, whereby the anabaptists are refuted.”

The Confession of Wirtemberg.

“ We acknowledge that Baptism is to be ministered as well to infants as to those that are grown to full age, and that it is to be used in the Church, even to the end of this world, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, according to Christ his institution,” &c.

—“ Moreover we teach, that he which is baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is sprinkled with a spiritual anointing, that is, is made a member of Christ through faith; and endued with the Holy Ghost, that the ears of his mind may be opened, and the eyes of his heart lightened, to receive and understand heavenly things,” &c.

The Confession of Sueveland.

“ And seeing that Baptism is a sacrament of

that covenant, which God hath made with those that be his, promising that he will be their God, and the God of their seed, and that he will be a revenger of wrongs and take them for his people; to conclude, seeing it is a token of the renewing of the Spirit, which is wrought by Christ: therefore our Preachers do teach, that it is to be given to Infants also, as well as that in times past under Moses they were circumcised: for we are indeed the children of Abraham, and therefore that promise, “I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed,” doth no less pertain unto us, than it did to that ancient people.”

To the above I add the following extracts from the Articles of Religion of the United Church of England and Ireland.

Of the Sacraments.

“ Sacraments ordained of Christ, be not only badges or tokens of Christian men’s profession ; but rather, they be certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace, and God’s good will towards us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him.”

Of Baptism.

“ Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened ; but it is also a sign of Regeneration, or New

Birth, whereby as an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly, are grafted into the Church ; the promises of forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed ; Faith is confirmed, and Grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God. The Baptism of young children is in any wise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ."

From the above extracts it appears—

First, that the child is introduced to the Church for Baptism, as the child of believing Parents, in virtue of the promise made to them.

Secondly, That Baptism is the sign and seal of the faith which the child possesses in virtue of the election of grace.

Thirdly, That Christian Baptism is but Jewish Circumcision expressed under another outward and visible sign, "For the which cause Paul calleth Baptism the Circumcision of Christ."¹

Lastly, That no doubt should be entertained as to the child's condition : he is an adopted child of God, and should be esteemed and educated as such.

Compare these particulars with the letter and spirit of our Baptism and its kindred formularies, and how exactly do they agree !

¹ Confession of Belgia.

LETTER VIII.

ADVANTAGES WHICH MIGHT BE EXPECTED TO ARISE FROM THE ABOVE INTERPRETATION OF OUR BAPTISMAL SERVICE.

THE advantages which might be expected to arise from the practical adoption of the above interpretation of our Baptismal Service, are neither few nor doubtful : the practice will amply vindicate the principle, for as we **BELIEVE**, so will it appear that we shall be **ESTABLISHED**.

The **FIRST ADVANTAGE** arising from the above interpretation of our Baptismal Service is, that —**IT RENDERS ALL OUR FORMULARIES INTELLIGIBLE.**

It puts a sense and a meaning into them fully equal to their expressions : and while it gives those expressions their plain and natural meaning, it justifies them from the charge of being too strong and intense ; since, after all, they do but inadequately convey the unquestionable privileges, and “unsearchable riches” of the Gospel of Christ.

It is vain to dissemble, My Dear Friend, that

we have ourselves found considerable difficulty in reconciling the several formularies of our Church with each other ; and that we have for years been accustomed to hear a variety of complaints and doubts as to the consistency of our Liturgy. What various interpretations have been given of the Baptismal Service ! To what difficulties have those been reduced, who, teaching that our salvation depends on our strict obedience to the Law, would bend the letter of the Catechism and the Confirmation Service, to the support of this mistaken system ? And how many have been confounded, that our Liturgy, in its various Services, assumes all who use it to be real believers in Christ Jesus, and that it makes no provision for neutral characters, or for any but penitent and believing sinners ! The Service for "the Visitation of the Sick" has been constantly reproached as inapplicable to the great proportion of cases, which the minister, in the discharge of his duty, is called upon to attend ; and the Burial Service has been the repeated theme of complaint, both with friends and foes, that it can with propriety be read over real believers alone. And have not good and intelligent ministers of our Church been driven to such distress of mind by these doubts and perplexities, as to hesitate, whether they could, consistently with the claims of a safe conscience, continue to minister her Services ? If you, My Dear Friend, have been happily exempt from

the trial, I must confess, that such doubts have arisen in my own mind, and in those of some excellent men with whom I have conversed on this subject ; nor were such doubts ever dissipated from my mind, till the above view of the Baptismal Service furnished a clue of interpretation, which admitted me to the meaning of every subsequent formulary, and with that meaning, displayed the beauty and consistency of the whole.

How perfectly intelligible then is our whole Liturgy viewed from the portal of Baptismal regeneration—faith in the promise covenanted to the children of believers. Fix your eye but upon this entrance, and all the beautiful edifice rises in simple integrity, and commanding majesty before you. In **BAPTISM** “ we being persuaded of the good-will of our heavenly Father towards this Infant, declared by his Son Jesus Christ, and nothing doubting but that he favourably alloweth this charitable work of ours in bringing this Infant to his holy Baptism ; ” in the **CATECHISM** we proceed consistently to teach him, that he was then “ made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an Inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, ” and that the Holy Ghost even at this present “ sanctifieth, ” or is “ sanctifying him, and all the elect people of God. ” At his **CONFIRMATION**, the Bishop accepts him as a believer, as “ regenerate by water and the Holy Ghost ; ” as “ given forgiveness of all ”

his “sins ;” and with the Church prays the “Lord” to “strengthen” him “with the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, and daily increase in” him “his manifold gifts of grace.” In “THE COMMUNION,” he is privileged to say with the Church, “We most heartily thank thee, for that thou dost assure us thereby of thy favour and goodness towards us, and that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of thy Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people.—And we most humbly beseech thee, O heavenly Father, so to assist us with thy Grace, that we may continue in that holy fellowship,” &c. In THE LITURGY, the whole language and spirit is suited to a child of God addressing a Father of mercy. In addition to the passages already adduced in page 154, the following selections from the Collects can only be pleaded by a believer, “grant that we being regenerate and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit;”¹ “mercifully grant that we which know thee now by faith, may after this life have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead.”² And at the “solemnization of MATRIMONY,” he is recognized as belonging

¹ On the Nativity.

² On the Epiphany. See also the Collects for Good-Friday, Easter-Even, Easter-day, Ascension-day, Trinity-Sunday, and All-Saints day : indeed those Collects are rather exceptions, where the expressions are not peculiar and appropriate to believers.

to "the Communion of the Saints." "We are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the face of this Congregation to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony;" and the Church prays for them both in the character of believers, "O Lord, save thy servant and thy handmaid, who put their trust in thee." In "**THE CHURCHING OF WOMEN**, the Congregation prays for "the woman" who "shall come into the Church," "O Lord, save this woman, thy servant; who putteth her trust in thee." In **THE VISITATION OF THE SICK** the same words are repeated, and the whole office is calculated for the encouragement and spiritual establishment of the believer. And in "**THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD**," the crowning work of a holy assurance is accomplished over the believer by "the Communion of the Saints," when they conclude their earthly intercourse, by giving "hearty thanks for that it hath pleased thee to deliver this our Brother out of the miseries of this sinful world." From the beginning to the end of this exquisite display of order the same principle appears in active prominence,—a saint is introduced into "the Communion of the Saints" at Baptism, and in this holy character he is uniformly entertained by the Church, so long as he can be a partaker of her communion, and till her means of grace have under the divine blessing perfected him for glory. I am not aware that any force is put

upon a single expression in any one of our formularies by the above explanation : all is natural, harmonious, lucid, consistent, and intelligible : it is an interpretation which a child may comprehend. Let us only enter by the portal of Baptismal regeneration in faith of the promise, and the key is in our hands, which opens the door of every apartment, in orderly succession, and admits us, with ease, into all the beautiful interior of the building.

Hence necessarily follows ANOTHER ADVANTAGE of the above interpretation,—AN INTELLIGIBLE EXHIBITION OF THE BEAUTY AND SYMMETRY AND ADMIRABLE PROPORTION OF THE CHURCH TO WHICH WE BELONG.

What other interpretation exhibits it in a light so truly lovely and desirable, and so excellently adapted to man as a fallen and helpless creature upon earth ? Particular prayers with their peculiar comprehensiveness, accurate arrangement, and felicitous expression may arrest our attention, and particular Services may receive our commendation ; but the excellency of a magnificent edifice does not appear so much in the minute perfection of its parts, as in the concurrence of each particular part in producing an imposing whole. Nay, so far may those parts, when detached from the body, be from engaging our approbation, that they may incur our reproach, as disproportioned, inappropriate, and useless ;

nay as wholly inapplicable and unfit; as it is well known that some of our formularies, when viewed as detached portions, have frequently been esteemed. But viewed from this point, the whole edifice rises before us in admirable beauty and exquisite proportion. Each part has its appropriate place; and every distinct member conduces to the symmetry and stability of the whole. Let our Church be presented to the people of the land in this engaging aspect, and let the real excellence of her system be recommended to them by the practical application of her blessings; let it be wrought out in all its winning experience, and let its advantages be but once felt, by active and persevering efforts on the part of us who are ministers to introduce them to the notice of our charge; and what an intelligible ground of preference, of esteem and attachment would be presented to the people! Popular attachment then, would not rest on the fickle grounds of fashion, education, prejudice, and custom, or on the more rational grounds of regard for things constituted, of political expediency, and national advantage; but on the real spiritual blessedness, which such a system, practically and experimentally applied must necessarily confer, and on all the virtues and graces, which, taking their rise in the tranquillity of the domestic circle, would gradually expand, till they reached the remotest relations and conditions of social life. It would be

grace, pouring out its rich abundance of blessings from each paternal roof, till it met in one vast confluence, not of national merely, but of international benignity and love. Such, I own, My Dear Friend, have been long my grounds of attachment to our Church. I know nothing human, as a system of spiritual means, in any measure comparable to her. I am not insensible to her defects, and I do most sincerely deplore them ; while, at the same time, I cannot but admire her capabilities of usefulness, her well-adapted machinery, and her unrivalled ability, not only to bless this distinguished country, but the whole earth, to every part of which, the spiritual or unspiritual condition of England, at this hour, in God's mysterious providence is imparting a corresponding character and complexion. Yes, indeed, I believe our Church to be “the Eldest Daughter of the Reformation :” it is a high designation, but it is one, to which, I believe, she can well vindicate her claim ; and while we are able practically to display her excellencies in ameliorating the moral condition of her people, we are adopting the most certain means of securing their attachment, and perpetuating their support.

ANOTHER ADVANTAGE resulting from the above interpretation is, that—**IT EXHIBITS IN LIVELY REALITY THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE “COMMUNION OF THE SAINTS.”**

I say, *reality*, for what reality is presented to the

people, loosely and imperfectly apprehended as this communion is at present. It is true the expression occurs in the Creed, and is often repeated by the lips ; but how few seem to attach any intelligible meaning to it ! and how little can usually be collected by the interpretation of these words, when expressed in these indefinite and unmeaning generals, “ a partaking of the common benefits and privileges of Christianity ! ” What are these common benefits and privileges ? are they the means of grace merely, and a partaking of the outward and visible sign ? or are they the real spiritual virtues of which these means are but the medium—the inward and spiritual grace, of which the visible representation of the Sacraments is but the outward sign ? But once admit the interpretation above given, and no doubt, or uncertainty, or indistinctness remain. On the ground of the promise, faith beholds the baptised introduced into “ the Communion of the Saints.” The faith of the believing Parents hath sanctified the Child, “ else were ” their “ children unclean, but now are they holy : ”¹ and the Church has acknowledged this application of the promise, by admitting the Child into its bosom, and making it a partaker of its sympathies, its interests, its prayers, and its praises. Nor does it relax the interests of this communion in its subsequent instruction

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 14.

and edification, from infancy to youth, from youth to manhood, from manhood to age. The interest once imparted never declines: it is a communion in Christ, and so long as each is grafted into him by faith, being members of him, they are also members one of another. How truly blessed would be the intercourse of every parish among us, did it but present the character which our Church assumes it to do! We should then meet each other not contented with inquiring after the bodily health of ourselves and children; the second question, at least, would be expressive of our Christian communion; and we should mutually inquire as to the spiritual welfare of our souls: and if the latter question were answered satisfactorily as to the soul, the welfare of the soul would be the measure of that we should wish to the body, according to the Apostle's words; "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."¹ The health of the soul would then be deemed more important than that of the body; and our inquiries after each other's children, would chiefly consist as to their possession of those graces which are the common benefit of the "Communion of the Saints," to which we trust they belong. And is it really wild and enthusiastic, to assume, with our Church, that the whole of

¹ 3 John 2.

the baptised in her communion may become that “blessed company of faithful people,” which forms the true Church of Christ? It appears to me, that either this is her meaning, according to the plain interpretation of her letter, or that all her Services are a mockery. And if this be her meaning, with what show of reason or propriety can we hope for that holy state of society, to which she would elevate her people, unless we act faith upon those promises which she places as the foundation of every spiritual blessing? Let us at least do our part, act consistently with the vows made for us, and those we have made for others in Baptism, and leave the honour of his own faithfulness, and the credit of his own word to God.

ANOTHER evident ADVANTAGE attending this interpretation of the Baptismal Service received and acted upon, would be,—THE IMPROVED ADMINISTRATION OF THE WHOLE SERVICE OF OUR CHURCH.

Do our Congregations present a lively picture of that worship which might be expected in “the Communion of the Saints?” Have we not often heard the Service complained of as dry, wearisome, uninteresting, and as incapable of arresting the attention? and has not the appearance of the Congregation, drowsy, inattentive, and indifferent, too frequently proved, that they at least have felt the Service to be such as is above described. And have not ministers complained,

that it is difficult to keep up their attention while the same routine work is to be performed ? And has not this defect too often become apparent in the heavy listlessness, and dull monotony, and evident want of interest with which the Service has been conducted ? But let the above interpretation prevail and be maintained, and a sense of the “ Communion of Saints ” would, with the aid of the Spirit, be maintained, which would infuse new life and sense and intelligence into the ministration of our Service, however frequently repeated. How few seem to attend “ the assembling of ourselves together,”¹ with any lively impression that they are about to enjoy that communion with the Church, in the great Congregation, which most honours God ? Does the minister approach the desk animated by a sense of the privilege bestowed on him in leading the devotion of “ the Communion of Saints ? ” Do the people approach the church with any similar impression, that they are privileged to enjoy this delightful communion ? Does either the one or the other, under the pleasing anticipations of this enjoyment, offer up a prayer as they go up to the house of God, any “ song of degrees ” —“ I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.—For my brethren and companions’ sakes, I will now say, peace be within thee ? ”² Did minister and people

¹ Heb. x. 25.

² Psalm cxxii. 1, 8.

go up with this heavenly spirit, how different would the whole strain of our worship be, both in heart and lip ! The excellence of our Service would then appear in its own characteristic simplicity and beauty. There is no wearisomeness in the Service : alas ! our unspiritual hearts are indisposed for spiritual communion, either with God or man, and hence inattention, distraction, and fatigue. But let us once realize the impression, that we are about to enjoy the richest communion that earth presents, and both minister and people, with awakened expectations, will endeavour to excite corresponding affections. Then secret but fervent aspirations will arise to the great Master of Assemblies in our way to his temple, “ Awake, O north wind, and come thou south ; blow upon my garden that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my Beloved come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits.”¹ We should take our places among a holy brotherhood, and offer up a fervent prayer both for ourselves, our minister, and our fellow-christians, that the season might be a delight to our souls, and that the Spirit of Christ would cause us to say, “ It is good for us to be here.”² The minutes before the commencement of the Service would be improved, in pleading the opening promises to penitent sinners : “ When the wicked man,” &c. ‘ Lord, I am a

¹ Song of Solomon, iv. 16.

² Matt. xvii. 4.

wicked man ; my thoughts, my words, my acts, are wicked ; but I desire to turn away from my wickedness, and to do that which thy holy law approves ; turn me, O Lord, and I shall be turned ; and " save " my " soul alive." Filled with this penitent concern, with what interest and advantage would the minister begin his address, more especially inviting his people to the confession of sin ; and with what heartfelt humility in the presence of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of each other, would they join in the " General Confession !" after the " Absolution," with what peculiar meaning, as expressive of " the Communion of Saints," would the Lord's prayer open, " Our Father," the Father of all saints, of the whole Church of believers upon earth, for which we pray, that it may embrace every living soul, " thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven !" with what holy energy would the minister utter, " O Lord, open thou our lips," and the people answer, " and our mouth shall shew forth thy praise !" and after the intermediate sentences, with what appropriate exultation would they repeat, " O come let us sing unto the Lord, let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation !" Each psalm, as the Service proceeded, would find a corresponding character of prayer or praise in our hearts ; each lesson would be read, according to its peculiar character, of simple narrative, earnest conversation, anthori-

tative precept, or encouraging promise ; rejecting equally the pompous and turgid manner, as the indifferent and negligent. And after each portion of God's holy word, what heartfelt bursts of praise for the same would find expression in the respective songs of praise ? " We praise thee, O God," and " O be joyful in the Lord all ye lands." The Creed would then be the concurrent confession of faith of each individual in the Congregation ; and " I believe," issuing with grateful acknowledgment from each particular Christian, would declare the united faith of the Church. And after a solemn pause, how would minister and people provoke each other to renewed devotion ; the minister affectionately and pointedly pronouncing this blessing on the people, " The Lord be with you," and the people returning the blessing, " and with thy spirit ! " ¹ It is unnecessary to add more ; enough has been said, to show that on the above interpretation, with the aid of the Holy Ghost, a new character would be given to " the assembling of ourselves together," and that public worship among us, instead of being the cold and formal thing it is

¹ I have seen this done with most awakening effect : after the Creed, the minister made a pause which was evidently felt : then with a voice and manner of affectionate earnestness, he resumed the attention of his people to prayer, by wishing them the presence of the Spirit, and the people acknowledged the blessing, by praying that the Holy Spirit might be with their minister's spirit in return.

too often at present, without intelligence and therefore without enjoyment, would then be a “blessed company of faithful people,” enjoying the privileges of divine communion in all the rich and varied devotion afforded by our Church. Religion being felt as a reasonable service,—an intelligible service, would, with God’s blessing, be a spiritual service also. No man can enjoy what he does not understand. But let this interpretation of our Baptismal Service once be carried into general practice, and maintain its own proper place in our worship, and a luminous intelligence would pervade our whole Liturgy, which, with the blessing of the Spirit, would convince every worshipper of the reality of “the Communion of the Saints,” by his own individual experience of the blessings which that communion was actually bestowing on himself. The Church of England would then exhibit THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS indeed.

So administered, and so felt, would the Services of our Church be any longer complained of as tedious and tiresome?

ANOTHER ADVANTAGE arising from this interpretation of our Baptismal Service would spring directly from that above stated: for the blessings of the “Communion of Saints” being once felt, we should naturally be desirous of cultivating them, by—**A MORE FREQUENT OBSERVANCE OF THE MEANS OF GRACE.**

Men are in public what they are first in private ; and “ where was public virtue to be found where private was not ? ” Closet duties would be more attended to ; and closet piety, the piety of the heart, communion with God in meditation and prayer more encouraged. Religious knowledge would then consist, not in the stores derived from a multiplicity of books merely ; but in that heavenly possession **THE WORD OF GOD**, made our own by meditation and spiritual digestion, dwelling in us richly, and flowing out in a blessed benignity of word and act to all around us ; and every Christian would then exhibit that best literature which Herbert ascribes to a minister, “ The Parson’s library is a holy life.” It would be knowledge diffusing itself in a holy experience of peace and love. Our houses would present means of grace, not only in the stated meeting of the family for purposes of devotion, but every meal would be a means of grace ; the topics of conversation receiving a divine tendency and complexion from the holy principles within. All the subjects of human art and science, and that master-subject as to man, political economy combined with history, being all secondary and subservient to the one grand design, the advancement of human happiness and the glory of God in the establishment of the Redeemer’s kingdom on earth. How delightful would social intercourse then be, when “ they that feared

the Lord spake often one to another,"¹ and the subject of their conversation was, how they might most "let" their "light shine before men," that thus seeing their "good works" they might "glorify" their "Father which is in Heaven!"² And what praise would then be of God in "the great Congregation!" We could not then consent to confine our Church assemblies to one day in the week; every day must then be refreshed by at least one public service in the parochial church. It is evident that the advantages of a holy communion would be ever endeavouring to enlarge and to perpetuate themselves; and this could alone be done, under God, by presenting religion more frequently and more attractively to the people. Five times in the day, it is said, does the Mowdden ascend the minaret of the mosque and call the Mohammedans to prayers. The Roman Catholics are ever presenting the exterior of religion to their people: the churches are open during a great part of the day either for public service, or the admission of private worshippers; the bells are addressing the ear, the host or the crucifix the eye; and in some form or other the exterior of their religion meets the senses of their worshippers. And has it not a deadening and infidel effect upon our Protestant population, that during six days of the week, religion

¹ Mal. iii. 16.

² Matt. v. 16.

is, with us, almost excluded from our view ; except in some Towns the bells ringing for prayers on two days in the week ; an occasional toll at the death or burial of a neighbour, or the place of worship, or the house or the person of the minister, reminding us of religious ministrations ? The infrequency of our public meetings for worship, is both the evidence and cause of our present low condition of spiritual communion. Provision is made in our Liturgy for morning and evening Service on every day of the year : and, as it is easy to see, that, with the decline of this practice, vital godliness has declined among us, so it is as easy to see that with the adoption of this practice, or of that which approximates to it, the establishment of weekly lectures in the church, or religious assemblies in private, vital godliness is on the increase among us. Without the means of grace, we cannot expect grace to abound ; and did we value "the Communion of Saints," the principal means of that communion would necessarily be cultivated. Again our churches would be opened daily ; and the Church at this day would resemble that of old, of which it is said, "they were continually in the temple praising and blessing God."¹

Such was the practice of our Reformers : and if we would have the times of the Reformers we

¹ Luke xxiv. 53.

must have the Reformers' principles, and the Reformers' practice.

I know it may be said, that the industry and energies of the country are so occupied in trade and agriculture at this day, that it would be a vain attempt to reduce the people to this practice of our ancestors. But is not this rather the voice of avarice, clamorous to engross every portion of time for human exertion, except that portion which is absolutely necessary to maintain and recruit it? It is a most fatal mistake in a Christian country, to suppose that national wealth and national prosperity are synonymous terms. A visit to our manufacturing districts would soon dissipate this delusion in every unprejudiced mind; where it is but too evident, that human prudence and human happiness bear no proportion to excessive wages and exorbitant means.¹ Less wealth and more piety, by dimi-

¹ An incident that has happened this day, (Feb. 23, 1827.) while I am preparing the above for the press, will amply illustrate my meaning. A poor Irish woman with a child at her breast, while applying at my door for relief, sunk down in a state of utter exhaustion. On recovering she declared that she had been without food for four-and-twenty hours, that her husband was too ill to work, and that the family was starving. On visiting them, I found them in the most squalid condition of pauperism; the man disabled from disease, the room destitute, cheerless, and dirty, and the children filthy and unmanageable. On inquiry I found that the man, when in health, could earn from twenty to thirty shillings per week, that his wife was a Protestant, and he a Roman Catholic; that he had been in

nishing temptation on the one hand, and supplying means of moral amelioration on the other, would make them a far happier population than they are. Never let it be forgotten for a moment, while human happiness is the subject of our consideration, that it is Christianity alone which sets up a due standard of civilization ; a standard,

England eight years, but that neither of them had attended any place of worship, not having been able to purchase decent clothes. On informing the man, that on the lowest calculation of his earnings, he had an income of £52 per annum, which with a wife and two children should not only have enabled him to live in comfort, but also to have laid up a reserve for sickness, in a Savings' Bank ; he seemed quite astonished. The fact was, that brutish ignorance had begotten improvidence, and improvidence pauperism. His want was that of a spiritual principle to have taught him those habits which should have improved his means. Christ crucified, received into the hearts of this couple, as the seed of spiritual life, would have elevated them and their family from a state of degradation little better than that of the brute, and have induced those habits which would have provided them with every necessary comfort here, and eternal happiness hereafter. But no such sound had reached them ; for they were living in a dense population, where in each apartment was a family, and in a parish consisting of nearly forty-thousand persons. Is it either policy or justice to go on, as we do, transporting and hanging such a population ? Surely their pitiable ignorance demands rather the aggressive kindness of a domiciliary visit from the unwearied perseverance of a Christian minister to enlighten them with holy principles, than the unsparing rigour of an inflictive jurisprudence to punish them for offences which they have scarcely been taught to consider such, and to the commission of which not a few of them have been regularly trained from their infancy.

which is as far removed from the fastidiousness of an excessive refinement, as it is from the rudeness of a ferocious barbarism ; and that a pause in the midst of the hurry and distraction of business, which our Church proposes in the morning and evening Services of each day, while it broke through the engrossment of worldly habits, and tempered the keenness of secular pursuits, would also sanctify our daily occupation, and, with God's blessing, introduce holy principles and practices into the ordinary commerce of life. Trade and agriculture have nothing in them more peculiarly repulsive to a holy communion than any other modification of human agency in which the life of man is past, and by which his well-being is promoted : but as they afford a large field for the display of avarice and selfishness, every day's experience but too evidently proves that they need the powerful counteracting influence of grace to moderate and restrain them. So far then are our increased energies from being a reason that the frequent religious assemblies of our ancestors should be discontinued, that they are in fact a more urgent reason for their renewal ; since if the world has indeed so fully engrossed our attention, the everlasting welfare of our souls demands a proportionate counteraction.¹

¹ The comparative condition of the *manufacturing* and the *agricultural* labourer has a strong claim on the most patient consideration of the political economist. The one seems to

But it may be said, you could not prevail on the people to attend ; the service would be performed to bare walls. I do not believe that this objection would hold long, if the privileges of “the Communion of the Saints” were practically exhibited, and the real Gospel of mercy and peace were offered in all its attractive loveliness. If in addition to the prayers, a familiar exposition of some portion of Scripture were orderly given, say, a Gospel or Epistle, or a book of the Prophets, the minister opening the spiritual sense of the words in one continuous explanation, by

have risen to the attainment of *luxuries* unfit for his condition, while the other has in proportion, been sinking into a state of pauperism which admits of little more than *necessaries*, if it can indeed be said to admit even of them. Excessive wages have elevated the one to luxuries which corrupt him ; defective wages have depressed the other to dependence and pauperism, which deprive him of industrious effort under the pressure of despair. It seems clear that the most commanding state of commerce is not national prosperity, if that prosperity be measured, as it should be, by the general well-being of the community. Much less is national wealth national security. Where is Tyre ? Where is Babylon, “the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldee’s excellency,” with its “head of gold ?” Where are all the empires which succeeded it ? Fallen—and that, not because they were not rich, but because their moral bore no proportion to their temporal wealth. And if England would enjoy either prosperity or security, she must, with her quarterly returns of revenue, adopt a quarterly return of morals also. Wealth, untempered by morality, can but produce excess ; and excess, by corrupting the moral resources of a people, has been the grand destroyer of all the nations that have preceded us, as history amply testifies.—Aug. 1825.

which, in course of time, the whole sense of the complete Bible were laid before the people ; and if this exposition were accompanied by an interesting, short, and pithy extemporaneous application, familiarly and affectionately brought home to their respective bosom and business ; and thus the whole Service rendered interesting and impressive,—might we not hope that the Holy Spirit would acknowledge this renewed spiritual agency with his blessing, and induce such an attendance as would soon evidence that the minister had not run in the path of his fore-fathers in vain. Two striking advantages would result from this practice, the first to the ministry : for let this habit of familiar exposition but once prevail among us, and the unnatural and unsocial, and therefore uninteresting practice of written sermons would gradually cease ; and extemporaneous expression once become habitual, would also become familiar and easy. Is it not by listening to a graceless fastidiousness, and to that corrupt taste and scholastic frigidity which prefer correctness to effect, that the ministry of our national Church, probably the best qualified of any national ministry in the world, has, for the last hundred and sixty years at least, by departing from the truth and simplicity of our ancestors, been condemned to comparative inefficiency ? One of our Reformers, himself a Bishop, asks, “ should one sermon every day be too much for a godly Bishop and

evangelical preacher?"¹ It is evident that he cannot mean a written sermon ; for such a labour, in addition to his ordinary engagements, would exceed the powers of the most able and industrious. It is this habit of exposition doubtless to which he refers, and as it would benefit the ministry, so secondly, in no small degree would it benefit the people. It would interest their best sense and their best feelings ; it would

¹ The whole passage, from Bishop Hooper, is so much in point that I subjoin it. "Exercise and diligence bring credit unto religion, whether it be true or false. For it never taketh place nor root in the people without diligence, as it is to be perceived by the acts and gestes done in the time of Jeroboam and Rehoboam, the kings of Israel and Judah.

"What brought the mass and all other idolatry into estimation, but daily preaching and saying thereof, with such laud and praise as every old wife knew what a mass was worth ? Fifteen masses in a church daily were not too many for the priests of Baal, and should one sermon every day be too much for a godly Bishop and evangelical preacher ? I wonder how it may be too much opened and declared unto the people ? If any man say, labour is left and men's business lieth undone by that means, surely it is ungodly spoke : for those that bear the people in hand of such things, know right well that there was neither labour, care, need, necessity, nor any thing else that heretofore would keep them from hearing of mass, though it had been said at four of the clock in the morning. Therefore as far as I can see, people were contented to lose more labour, and spend more time, then to go to the devil, than now to come to God ; but my faith is, that both master and servant shall find the advantage they gain thereby at the year's end, though they hear morning sermon and morning prayers every day of the week." Fathers, &c. vol. v. pp. 210, 211.

convince them that religion was something more than the exclusive business of the Sabbath ; it would show them that it was the business of every day, the great leading concern of life, which should regulate all its interests, and mingle with all its employments. It would help much, also, to do away distinctions, and names, and parties. By this continuous explanation of Scripture, the whole Bible, in all its doctrines and precepts, in all its faith and practice, would be offered to them : they would not then take a partial view of it, as they must do at present, from having it proposed to them in scraps and detached texts ; but Scripture would be seen in its integrity, an integrity which as it is its main perfection, so it is almost impossible to present in one or two sermons, that is, discussions of single texts, as now represented on one day in the week. Party names would cease, and partial views of truth would be corrected as the detached text merged in the self-expository context, and each several portion maintained its appropriate bearing in the consistency of truth : so that sermons would not be so much dry and didactic statements, conveying mere knowledge to the understanding, as experimental expositions of Scripture truth, exhibiting with the words and meaning, the simplicity and spirituality of the sacred page, for the edification as well as instruction of "the Communion of the Saints." Once interest the heart and you gain the man

once make him feel the blessedness of a holy communion, and it would be no question whether he would cultivate its privileges. Let the doors of our churches be thrown open daily, and the above desirable mode of worship introduced, and it would be seen that an interesting worship would, with the blessing of the Spirit, obtain an interested audience; and the privileges of "the Communion of the Saints" being once felt, a due estimate of them would provide the means of maintaining and establishing themselves. The Sacraments would then indeed be justly appreciated, and new Baptisms would daily be hailed with pleasure. But can we wonder, My Dear Friend, at our present low state of Church-communion, when such contracted public means are observed to support it? This "forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as" our "manner is," must be corrected, either by resorting to the daily public worship of our ancestors, or by the establishment of more frequent weekly lectures, if we would witness that communion, which must distinguish the latter-day glory of the Church, to which it seems to be an act of Christian duty to "exhort one another, and so much the more as" we "see the day approaching."

ANOTHER ADVANTAGE attending this interpretation of our Baptismal Service, would be—
THE GIVING TO EACH SACRAMENT THAT HONOR WHICH IS ITS DUE.

It is but too evident from the degraded condition to which the public Baptism of Infants is reduced among us, that this Sacrament is deprived of its just estimation. And it appears to me to be equally evident that as the one Sacrament is unduly depressed, the other is unduly elevated : so that while the one is receiving less than its due, the other is receiving more. In our old churches, by which, I mean those built before the Restoration, the font enjoyed a distinguished station towards the entrance of the church ; emblematically intimating, no doubt, the entrance and initiation of the baptised into the Church at the administration of the Sacrament of Baptism. And to this hour, in many of our country churches particularly, the broad and solid block of stone, let deep into the floor, where it has preserved its station for ages, upholding a short and rude column of granite, which supports, as a capital, a heavy mass of the same, presenting a spacious font sufficiently ample to contain the body of a child, according to the option of immersion or affusion granted by our rubric,—has maintained the indisputable rights, and initiatory claims of the Sacrament of Baptism, by maintaining its situation immediately opposite to the principal door of the church. But in many churches, built and repaired since the Restoration, the font has lost this distinguished place at the principal entrance : it has been

removed from that conspicuous spot where it challenged observation, and placed out of sight under the gallery, or condemned to yet more hopeless seclusion in some unfrequented part of the edifice. In many churches, in and near the metropolis, this is strikingly the case; in one of which, as I was lately officiating as God-father to the child of a friend, I could not but lament the cheerless character of the service, compared with what it ought to be. There were none present, I think, besides the necessary attendants: the font was placed in a dark corner under the gallery, in a pew close to the vestry: it was only within the church; and it occurred to me, that Baptismal degradation wanted but two more removes of the font to make the Sacrament itself a complete nullity, or indeed to get rid of its public administration altogether: the first was from the church into the vestry; the next from the vestry into the lumber room, among the fragments of brooms and hassocks, and all that was discarded and obsolete. And indeed, My Dear Friend, unless the Sacrament of Baptism be restored to its honours,—an event, which nothing, as it appears to me, but the practical assertion of the above interpretation can, humanly speaking, effect,—what but the mere civil requisitions of a Christian name and a Baptismal register, can prevent it from utter extinction as a public Sacrament of the Church? The real advantages of Baptism

seem to be so indistinctly understood, that the mere observance of the ceremony can hardly be expected to preserve it from oblivion. Cheaply as its spiritual blessings are estimated, divest it but of its civil distinctions, and our Papal regard for a ceremony is scarcely so intense, as to encourage the expectation, that the ceremony itself would long survive the invasion of indifference, and negligence, and desuetude, and unbelief to reduce it as a public act to utter annihilation.

It is not a little observable that this Sacrament has been losing its honours, as its fellow Sacrament has been obtaining an excessive regard. The Sacrament of the body and blood of our Saviour Christ, is known in our church by its distinctive title, "The Communion." And it has received this title doubtless, as affording the richest act of communion that the saints can hold either with their Saviour or with each other. The more lively apprehensions they entertain of the sufferings and sacrifice of their Redeemer, the more is their love increased both towards him and all who are his. As this Sacrament then shows forth in so lively a manner the "death" of Christ "till he come;"¹ "if there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,"² if any holy sym-

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 26.

² Phill. ii. 1.

pathy, if any real "Communion of the Saints," this Sacrament must form the grand attractive medium of holy joy, and spiritual intercourse. Where then can the table which contains the elements of this holy communion stand with greater propriety than in the centre of the congregation in the body of the church? As the font standing at the entrance of the church is the intelligible emblem of initiation into the communion; so the table of consecrated elements exhibiting the common centre of all spiritual communion, Christ crucified, would stand with emblematic propriety in the midst of the congregation. This seems to have been its position in the ancient Church;¹ and from the period of the Reformation, to that when it was removed to its present situation at the east of the edifice, it seems to have maintained the same in our Church. I am aware, My Dear Friend, that the position of a font or a communion table may appear to be attended with very trivial effects, so trivial indeed as to be undeserving of notice: but he knows little of our common nature, who does not see that sentiments are often shaped by external things; and that while abstractedly considered, the location of a font or

¹ Mr. Gillies, in his interesting account of the Vaudois Church, says of the church of La Torre; "I did not observe any division to answer the description of a chancel: the communion table stands directly in front of the pulpit, and the pulpit is placed near the centre of the church," p. 107.

a table may signify nothing, yet that relatively considered it signifies much. For as the removal of the font from the entrance of the church has deprived the initiatory Sacrament of its publicity, and thereby of its meaning and import; so the undue elevation of the table of communion from the centre of the Congregation to a remote and isolated spot, has, in the minds of many, really altered the character of the Sacrament of “The communion,” and elevated it into an “altar,” to be venerated, not as the familiar emblem of Gospel communion, where “the king sits at his table”¹ and the “spikenard” of holy graces diffuses itself from and over the whole blessed company that encircle it; but rather as an altar attended by an unintelligible presence of deity, inspiring distance and terror into an awe-struck devotee. The mischief is practical; the complexion of the Sacrament is altered to common apprehension: for the Spirit of adoption manifesting itself in filial confidence, and peace, and love, which is the peculiar character of the Gospel, is exchanged for the hesitation, and reserve, and distrust of the Law. In “The Communion,” perfect love casteth out “fear;” in the Sacrament of “the altar,” the spirit of bondage generates “fear.” I am not aware that in any part of our Liturgy, Articles, and Homilies, “the

¹ Song of Sol. i. 12.

“altar” as synonymous with “The communion” once occurs. From the Communion Service itself it seems to be guardedly excluded: it is there called “the holy table” and in the rubric “the Lord’s table,” and the elements upon it are “creatures of bread and wine:” it knows no other sacrifice, than that of the Eucharist, “our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving,” founded on the sacrifice of Christ once made on the altar of the “cross,—who made there (by his one oblation of himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world,” and the grateful sacrifice of ourselves for the same. The “Companion” appointed to lead us “to the Altar” savours strongly of the rigour and severity of the Law: and the “The New Week’s Preparation” to be observed before the attendance on “the altar,” implies a state of soul which is rather an exception to the walk of a child of adoption, than that habitual grace, and continual holiness of spirit which he is desirous to cultivate, so as to be ready for prayer, or praise, or Sacraments, or means, every hour of his life. The practical difference between “The Communion” and “The altar” is wide indeed; it is just the difference between the Law and the Gospel. In the one we see the coldness of alienation, in the other, the confidence of affinity; in the one, we are “strangers and foreigners” approaching with the appre-

in the other, we enjoy the
child assured of our Father's
kindness towards us." I offer
the almost superstitious ob-
servation which the one Sacrament is often
received, not with any view of inno-
vation, to illustrate the indifference and
neglect with which the other is unjustly dis-
regarded. As the table has approached the one
end of the church, the font seems to have ap-
proached the other; and the undue elevation of
the one has been accompanied with the undue
degradation of the other. But let the above
interpretation of our Baptismal Service prevail,
and the font would resume its station of initiatory
publicity; and, with it, the Sacrament of Bap-
tism be admitted to the honours which it justly
claims: with the blessing of God, the reception
of the Child into the Church would become a
Congregational act, and all might sympathise
in a rite which was presented to the eye of all.

ANOTHER ADVANTAGE necessarily resulting
from the practical admission of the above inter-
pretation would be—**THE REFORMATION OF OUR
ECCLESIASTICAL POLITY.**

A renewed state of discipline must necessarily
spring from a well-understood and well-experi-
enced "Communion of the Saints:" and this
would be the principle of it. "Personal commu-
nion would be the measure of ministerial respon-
sibility." I have often admired the beautiful

theory of our discipline, and have perhaps as often deplored the failure of it in practice. I cannot conceive any arrangement more perfect than the division of the whole land into parishes, each under a resident Minister; a given number of these Ministers forming a deanery presided over by a Rural Dean; the Rural Dean responsible to the Archdeacon; the Arch-deacon accountable to the Bishop of the diocese; and the Bishop to the Arch-bishop of the province. Here is a theory of order beautiful and complete; combining the whole land in one harmonious system of ecclesiastical polity. But it is evident that beautiful as the theory is, without the constant application of a principle which shall preserve the limits of each department, and which shall provide for the needful accommodation of the system to the growing necessities of the population, such a polity may retain the name of order, without possessing that efficient reality in which genuine order consists. And the practical defect of this principle, as I apprehend, amply accounts for the pastoral provision of the country being so disproportionate to the spiritual wants of the people at this day. For had there been such a self-renewing principle applied, ecclesiastical ministrations would have arisen as the population of the country was increasing. Now this principle our Church possesses in the above interpretation of our Baptismal Service; and I cannot but think, that it is for want of applying

that interpretation in practice, that our present ecclesiastical provision is so altogether inadequate to the demands of the people. For once regard our Church as a “Communion of Saints,” and the principle establishes itself, that “personal communion must be the measure of ministerial responsibility.” Admit the validity of this principle, and no man will be required to accept a charge, the extent of which exceeds the utmost effort of human industry and ability: and when the charge does exceed that ability, each particular instance of that excess, will call the principle into action to meet the occasion.

Let us apply this principle then to our parishes. Say, that, when a minister is first placed over a parish, it consists of a thousand persons, a number with which he may hold personal communion; that it is his object to know every individual of his flock, and that by public ministrations and pastoral visits, he has a competent acquaintance with his people. Say, that the population in course of time amounts to two thousand; a number, with which no one man, with the unceasing devotion of all his energies to the pastoral work, could hope to hold personal communion in any satisfactory manner, without a well-arranged and active auxiliary system of church-wardens, sidesmen, and overseers, who would not only attend to the temporal wants of the people, but the spiritual also. With such an auxiliary system perhaps such a

number at the utmost might be committed to one minister. When this population, by continuing to increase, exceeded the ability of the pastor to hold personal communion with each individual, and that excess amounted to a given number, or the health of the incumbent was insufficient for his charge, a curate might then be appointed. And when that excess amounted to a population of one thousand, an independent pastoral charge might then take place, the parish be divided, and a second minister appointed. Admit but the above principle of the necessity of "personal communion in pastoral charge," and ministerial agency would increase as the spiritual wants of the people increased. It is clear, that, as the personal communion of the minister is felt, his character as a minister is felt and acknowledged and maintained ; but when this ceases, sympathy ceases ; and where there is no sympathy there is no interest. A Church, the blessings of which are not felt, can be but little prized ; and hence, I apprehend, the prevailing indifference of so large a portion of our population to the Established Church. Nor does it appear to me that any act of legislation, or any effort of human prudence, can restore our Church to the place which she should hold in the affections of the people, till the above principle is practically carried into effect. Assuredly the division of a parish amounting in population to sixty or forty thousands into four parishes is but a faint approach to effectual ame-

lioration : and if the mother Church should in any case retain the right of Baptism, the very seed of pastoral and congregational communion being wanting, such communion cannot reasonably be expected. The most certain mode of increasing the indifference of the people to the Establishment is to crush that communion in its principle, and to do away one of the most winning and affecting modes of connecting the minister with his people. And must not the necessary consequence of such a system be the rapid diminution of popular respect for this Sacrament, when we allow for the ignorance and lukewarmness and infidelity of so large a population, which can never be expected to encounter the distance and the difficulties of bringing the child to the church ? A field, the size of which exceeds the ability of the cultivator, must be partially barren. And as the means of cultivation diminish, the barrenness must proportionably increase. To preserve a Church from decline, it is necessary to have a principle in action which with a growing community shall provide a growing communion. Such a principle, with the blessing of the Spirit upon it, is, as I apprehend, provided by our Church in the above interpretation of our Baptismal Service. Adopt it, and you set an engine in motion which on the ground of the divine promise, shall renovate human society, and remedy the very defects of which we are at this moment complaining.

If it should be asked, from whence is the support of so large a supply of ministers to be derived? I reply, that, let but this personal communion be indeed a spiritual communion between the minister and his people, and it might be hoped that a respectable support would not be wanting; or should that be the case at first, a part might be supplied by the State, the cheapest as well as the happiest application which it could make of its funds; the improved condition of society under such a system, producing so great a saving of national expenditure in legal process, civil officers, jails, transportation, foreign colonies for transports, and all the outlay in the provision of penal inflictions, that the comparative advantages would fully justify this application of the funds.¹ Let "personal communion be the measure of pastoral charge;" and society would then receive so decided a moral amelioration, that the most inveterate infidel, from the necessity of supporting his own both private and public welfare, could not but support the Establishment. To grudge at upholding such a state of things, would be to grudge at upholding his own comforts. O that statesmen would be but just to

¹ Let this communion be once felt, and there would be a fund provided and supported by Christian zeal in every deanery or diocese, for the supply of competent Curates to the aged, the infirm, or the over-charged incumbent as occasion might require.

their own principles ! for if religion be admitted to be good for a State, it must, as the chief good, be a blessing as it reaches its highest attainable point of perfection : and, as to derive one shilling to the support of the State from any source which demoralizes the principles of the people, is the grossest impolicy, as it is in fact to increase the difficulties we would remove ; so to withhold support from that which has an evident tendency to moralize and improve them, is a policy which can but impoverish, and a saving which must terminate in penury.

It is unnecessary to proceed any further in the illustration of our principle ; let it only operate with respect to our parishes, and all the superior gradations of our ecclesiastical order would receive its vivifying influence. Each deanery would then feel the influence of its Rural Dean,¹ and be measured by his ability to

¹ Should the day of the above desirable state of communion ever arrive, the office of Rural Dean would be found one of the most efficient links in the polity of our Church. Bishop Brownrigg in his answer to Baxter [Life and Times, p. 175] on church government says, “ This proposal looks like our Rural Deaneries, or Choriepiscopal Order, which hath been laid much aside, but for the reducing of it, and to make it profitable, I wish that it may be bounded with fit canons prescribing what they may do, and with intimation from the Bishop and his inspection, and that such a Dean or President may be continued for life, that being a means to breed experience, if he do not deserve a removal.” Bishop Hall expresses himself as follows. “ Instead of their Presbyteries [those of the Church of Scotland] consisting of several pastors, we

sustain that influence ; the Arch-deacon would reside in the midst of the deaneries over which he presided, to maintain the necessary personal communion ; the Bishop's diocese would then be limited by the number of Clergy with whom he could hold personal intercourse, and the Archbishop with his diocesan character would fill the tribunal of appeal, and the King be "in all causes, ecclesiastical as well as civil, supreme."

We may further remark, that this principle when once permitted to operate, would not only be the means of supplying a minister to every growing community, but that it would be attended with the further advantage of supplying places of worship also for the discharge of his ministratiops. It is a question of solemn import with every reflecting man, at this season of our abounding population, what effectual means can be resorted to, to render our supply of churches equal to the demand ? Has the Government any well-arranged plan for this purpose ? Has it taken a survey of the country, ascertained the ecclesiastical wants of our population, and arrived at

have our number and combination of Ministers, in the divisions of our several Deaneries ; under which are ranged all the Ministers within that circuit ; over whom the Rural Dean, as he is called, is every year chosen, by the said Ministers of that division, as their moderator for the year ensuing ; whose office, if it were carefully looked unto, and reduced to the original institution, might be of singular use to God's church." See " A modest offer to—the Assembly of Divines met at Westminster."

the decision whether Government can or ought to undertake the supply of those wants or not? Is it prepared to recommend to the Legislature any feasible plan to be effected by the public purse? Are the grants already made, the million of one year, the half million of another, and any other sums the Parliament may have contributed to this purpose, parts of a regular system of supply, or are they only occasional and temporary? Have our ecclesiastical rulers any other mode of relief in contemplation than that of voluntary contributions towards the enlargement of churches and the provision of additional seats? If there be no *system* of relief, it is in vain to expect relief: and if there be, and the progress of it, which we have already witnessed, is to be considered as a fair sample of its operation; it is but too evident that, as a measure of supply, it is altogether inadequate to our demands. But indeed, my Dear Friend, I must profess that I entertain no hope that either the efforts of Government, or of voluntary Societies are at all equal to this undertaking. We have no reason that I am aware of to believe, that our churches throughout the land originally rose from the pecuniary aid of our successive Governments, but in the zeal and voluntary exertions of the people. And let the appeal be but now made to the same voluntary energies, those energies being regulated and encouraged by certain known legislative securities

and privileges, and should we not wrong the zeal of our present more enlightened population, to doubt, for a moment, that their voluntary exertions would not at least equal those of their Popish ancestors ? Let the appeal be made ; and call this principle of Baptismal regeneration in virtue of the promise into action ; follow it out in persevering practice, and water it with constant prayer ; and probably neither would churches be wanting, nor ministers to officiate in them, nor a considerable support for such ministers, with little other aid from the State than its countenance and protection. Surely the most devoted supporter of our present line of policy, must be far from sanguine of success, while so many impediments are opposed to the religious zeal of the people in raising churches within the Establishment, and so unrestrained a liberty is given to the very same zeal in erecting places of worship among those who are without it.

ANOTHER ADVANTAGE flowing from the above interpretation, is that—**THIS COMMUNION WOULD BOTH BEGET UNITY AND PRESERVE IT.**

The Child trained up as a believer in Christ Jesus, practically renouncing the world, the flesh, and the devil, enjoying the articles of faith in his life, and walking in the path of the commandments as the “ trade ” of that life, would feel the reality of his Baptismal privileges. It would be no mere succession of phrases on his lips, but

the vital experience of every day, that he was “a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.” The reality of his privileges is the best evidence that he does indeed belong to him, “of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.” He is a child of this family in the domestic circle, in the neighbourhood, and in the Church ; and the acknowledged blessedness of his life convinces him, that he enjoys that unity of heart and sentiment and privilege, to interrupt which by any dissent which does not arise from imperious necessity,—a necessity arising from violated principle alone,—is a mischief to be deprecated, as depriving him of the most valuable blessing of life. Let any Christian society once possess these privileges, and unity must be the necessary consequence : the advantages of it would be so evident in the improved happiness of mankind ; that dissent from such a communion would be dreaded as high treason against the general interests of the community. The loveliness of such a state of society, would present any approach to disunion as an approach to exclusion from blessings, which each would esteem as his most desirable happiness. Let the members of the Established Church once exhibit this lovely communion, and *independence* then, would only be another name for exclusion ; it would be exemption from blessing, immunity from union, exception from peace : to be independent then,

would be to stand aloof from the highest welfare that man could obtain upon earth. The *Methodist* would then encourage no class distinct from that of the Church, where all is tending to produce one great class, one holy assembly of spiritual unity and love. The *Friend* would drop his distinctions of language and dress, and find an irresistible argument for the administration of the Sacrament of Baptism, in the unquestionable blessings which the faithful administration of that Sacrament is seen to produce. And the *Anabaptist* would cease from his "many pretences to scorn at the baptism of children," and beholding faith actively engaged in applying the promises to the children of believers, the whole education of the child proceeding on this faith, and "the Communion of the saints" supplied and maintained by it, would no longer permit "the Church to hazard so many souls by letting them run on till they come to ripeness of understanding, that so they may be converted and then baptized as infidels heretofore have been."¹ And as unity must necessarily be the result of so blessed a condition of society, so uniformity would as necessarily be the result of unity: essentials being the very bond of unity, circumstantial would soon assume their proper bearing and place. There would first be "in necessariis unitas," unity in essentials, as the basis of this

¹ Hooker, b. v. 64.

communion ; next “in non-necessariis libertas,” discretion in things indifferent ; and the heavenly result would be “in omnibus charitas,” a charitable concession and forbearance in every questionable point. Uniformity would no more be thought of as the effect of legislative enactments, but the use of a ring, or a surplice, or the observance of a posture being left to every man’s discretion, charity would direct the use or observance of each, as we could most accommodate ourselves to the taste, the feelings, or the prejudices of each other.. What tears did charity shed over the scrupulosity of Hooper, in refusing to wear the episcopal robes, and over the intolerant rigour of Ridley, in threatening him with the Fleet for such refusal ! What still more bitter tears did she shed over the unyielding spirit that frustrated the Conference at Hampton Court ; and the enlarged pretensions on the one hand, and the contemptuous stiffness on the other, that embittered the Conferences at the Savoy ! It is not in discussions on uniformity that unity can arise ; but uniformity will arise, without discussion in the establishment of unity. Once produce throughout the land “the Communion of Saints,” and all forms will sink into their proper estimation and assume their proper place : but once leave them as things indifferent to the discretion of such a communion, and charity would prevent discussion, peace would suggest the most desirable order, and “all

who profess and call themselves Christians," being "led into the way of truth," would "hold the faith in **UNITY OF SPIRIT,**" and consequently "in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life."

Shall I own, My Dear Friend, that my anticipations of that better season of Gospel harmony and love, the establishment of which is "my heart's desire and prayer to God,"¹ are attended with the hope, that at that day dissent will be utterly banished from the Church. Dissent under its best form, and most allowable circumstances, is to be deprecated as the infringement of unity. Christian love may tolerate it, but Christian love cannot approve it. To walk arm in arm with a Christian friend, enjoying in holy converse the consolations of our common faith, till we arrive at a spot where he must turn into a meeting-house, and I into a church, to engage in the most honourable worship of God, which is that of his assembled saints in the great Congregation ; in other words, to be separated in that act of Christian communion which most honors God, while it most elevates the soul in prayer and praise, under the richest experience of Church communion, is a state of things which the violated feelings of Christian sympathy cannot look forward to with complacency. The heart must feel a void and confess its dissatisfaction, while it laments that forbearance is called

¹ Rom. x. 1.

upon to tolerate, where a more perfect communion anticipated the free enjoyment of undis-
senting harmony and love. I am most willing
to admit, that dissent has not been unattended
with advantages. It has been one means of pre-
serving a holy seed among us, and we are
greatly indebted to it for the maintenance of our
civil and religious liberties ; but then it should
be equally admitted, and truth I think demands
the admission, that these are not advantages
necessarily flowing from dissent ; but rather
expressions of divine mercy and love, the graci-
ous providence of God over-ruling it for the
production of good. The evil of disunion is
necessary and certain : it is felt as a practical
evil in most of our parishes throughout the land.
It separates man from man, and Christian from
Christian ; it prevents concert, paralyses charit-
able effort by distracting both our designs and
performances, wastes our means, whether per-
sonal, pecuniary, or religious, and reduces the
order and moral agency of our admirable paro-
chial system to confusion and inefficiency. Could
all the decidedly religious in a parish combine
with the minister in religious and charitable
effort, in resisting abounding iniquity, and en-
couraging piety and order, both in public and
private ; this “ Communion of Saints ” would,
under God, exhibit so real and vital an excel-
lence in Christianity that the blessed result could
not but be a general conviction of its excellence.

It is the devil's own maxim, "Divide and conquer :" his grand object is to foster disunion, and to separate that he may destroy. When will our eyes be open to the wide-wasting malignity of this mischief ? When will Churchmen aim at the largest comprehension, by correcting a discipline which they confess to be imperfect, by forbearing to insist on the observance of ceremonies which they allow to be indifferent, and by reforming abuses which they admit to be scandalous ? And when will Dissenters abate excessive pretensions, give Churchmen credit for honest intentions, and while they admit the doctrinal excellencies of our Church in essentials, forbear to magnify with uncharitable triumph her imperfection in circumstantial ? I have no hope that these evils will find any qualification in the means which have been hitherto adopted to correct them. It is not in legislative liberality, or in a renewed conference at Hampton Court, or the Savoy, or in volumes of controversial discussion, that I conceive the remedy will originate ; these will either be superseded as unnecessary, or will be the consequence of that better spirit they are undertaken to promote. Once let the Christian community at large but feel the practical blessedness of that "Communion of Saints" which our Church proposes in her Baptismal Service, and in all her consequent formularies, and, the end being obtained, the means which have been hitherto adopted must necessarily cease.

And are we making no approach to this blessed concord? The signs of the times convince me that we are. Are not serious men aiming at the same object? Is not the establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom the common aim of every pious Churchman and Dissenter? By whatever name we designate ourselves as Christians, is not every Christian who really honors Christ, alive, each in his respective degree, to the awful condition of perishing man whether near or distant, and exercising himself in his own communion to extend the common blessings of salvation to all? Nor have we only one common aim, there is blessed be God one common means, which is I trust the earnest of a growing union in circumstantial also. The Bible Society I cannot but hail as the expression of the mass of the wise and good throughout the land, to merge their prejudices and differences, so far as they may, in one grand effort to promote the common cause. There are other Societies doubtless most excellent in design, and most efficient in practice; but these consist either exclusively of Churchmen or Dissenters, or indifferently of both, meeting on some common ground of charity, each of which has its respective importance in promoting union. But it is the Bible Society which is the grand expression of popular sentiment: inasmuch as there are more Churchmen probably conduced to its support than can be found in any Society

of Churchmen ; and more Dissenters enlisted in its cause than are enrolled in any Society of Dissenters. Here then is a grand practical advance made towards unity, without once mentioning the term : this blessed end following as an effect, from the holy principles by which the Society is combined. It is in fact a louder voice than that of Parliament, or Convocation, or Conference at Hampton Court or Savoy, or of ardent disputants whether for ceremonies or against them : it is vox populi which is indeed vox Dei in its most intelligible sense. It is practical unity ; the actual attainment of concord without the expressed design ; that concord being the necessary consequence of so holy an object, not its declared intention.¹ And as it is evident that the simplicity of the object proposed is the real ground of this concord, may we not hence learn the wisdom of simplifying every object, to which we expect the general concurrence of mankind. Let us hope that the reign of simplicity is advancing, for as it does advance, may we expect the return of peace. But viewing this union in the most favorable light, it is after all but the dawn of unity, the

¹ The unhappy difference which has lately agitated the Society may seem to some to have spoiled me of my argument. I do not think so : for thousands and tens of thousands are still under God actively engaged in its support, combined by the simplicity of its principle,—that the Bible is the word of God, and that it is the duty of Christians to circulate it.

first fruits rather than the crop. It is in the enlarged “Communion of the Saints” in which unity can alone be found: one in Christ their Head, they are firmly united in him; and let the energies of our Church have but full play in producing this communion; let the vigour of our faith be but proportioned to the extent of the promise to the children of believers, and under God we might expect a communion, the blessedness of which, would deprive separation of all its pretexts,—a communion which would exhibit discipline reformed, scandal abated, Christianity illustrated in all its practical suitableness, ignorances pitied, infirmities tolerated, dissent conciliated, the reign of love, and concord, and peace. Here would be such a community as would utterly annihilate dissent, for dissent would then be separation from the choicest blessings, a voluntary banishment from the happiest condition of society to which man could hope to be admitted on earth.

It is important to remark for our encouragement, that dissent had not ripened into a system of independent congregations, till a century had elapsed from the Reformation of our Church; and that as the original sense of Baptism declined, and Christian communion declined with it, so independence, and consequently disunion received their establishment. The conduct of the early Puritans, when Baptismal privileges and adherence to “the Communion of the

Saints" as contained in our Church, were better understood, as well as that of succeeding Non-conformists, seems to demonstrate that they contemplated no separation from the Church, but on the contrary were desirous of retaining communion with her to the last, had their own views been but tolerated. It required nearly a century of struggle and exclusion, of declining communion and growing separation, to prepare men's minds for the establishment of independence. As the spirit of the Reformation decayed, the spirit of dissent quickened and grew ; and as Baptismal communion was on the wane, indifference was strengthened, and alienation confirmed. And where is the remedy ? neither in law, nor conference, nor controversy ; but in exhibiting in practical efficacy the original design of our Reformers to preserve a constant "Communion of Saints," through the means of the Baptismal covenant to the infants of believers. Let faith be true to the promise ; let the loveliness and blessedness of the letter of our Baptismal Service receive a vital being in the loveliness and blessedness of a Baptismal education, and as men become sensible of the blessing, so will they be desirous to obtain it, and jealous of any separation that may either interrupt or destroy it. If we would regain separatists to the Establishment, it can alone be effected, under God, by giving them practical evidence of the superior blessings into which they will

be admitted, and the superior advantages which must attend a united Church. Carry the above interpretation into effect, and you present an irresistible argument to dissent : for you attain a higher object than that which any one denomination of dissent proposes, or indeed than all the denominations combined together propose ; for they would each receive applicants into their respective communions, but I am not aware that any one of them proposes as its object, to evangelize the land.

Or is the attainment of union in the Church really hopeless ? Is there indeed a moral impossibility that all "the Communion of Saints" shall join in one external communion which is acceptable to all ? I cannot believe it. Far as we are at present from so desirable a consummation, I believe its apparent impossibility arises from our education, and prejudices, and selfish narrowness, and even from habitual indisposition rather than from any necessary impediment. The Israelites could not enter into Canaan, not because the passage of Jordan was difficult, or the power of the Canaanites was invincible, but because of unbelief. It was a spiritual defect that rendered the promise vain : they would not believe it, and therefore made no attempt to accomplish it. Alas ! has not our unwillingness to unite paralysed all effort to attempt it. But do we want the richest promises for our encouragement ? Have we not the great evangelical song

of promise : “ Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace ? ”¹ shall not “ the work of righteousness be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever ? ”² and is not the promise again and again repeated, that antipathies shall cease, that “ the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion, and the fatling together ; and a little child shall lead them ? ”³ are the antipathies of Churchman and Dissenter more rabid and more irreconcileable than those of wolves, and leopards, and lions ? is their lust to devour each other more fierce than that of the wolf to devour the lamb, the leopard the kid, and the young lion the fatling ? Till it can be proved to be such, our recovery to union does not exceed the measure of the promise : and once let the “ little child,” HUMILITY, “ lead ” all parties to think more moderately of themselves, and more favorably of their neighbours, and I see no reason why this very day mutual love might not produce mutual concession, and all be harmony and peace.

We reprobate national sin, and we do well ; but our mother-sin appears to me to be—DISUNION AMONG THE PEOPLE OF GOD. The “ unknown and unknowable ” horrors of yet encouraged slavery, the waste of corporeal and moral strength

¹ Luke ii. 14.

² Isa. xxxiii. 17.

³ Ibid, xi. 6.

among the people by their unrestrained indulgence in spirituous liquors, the general spirit of gaming, and all the mass of corruption and subterfuge, both in Church and State, both in public and in private life, may well beget in us fear, and shame, and remorse; but alas! are not all these the consequences of disunion in the Church? if those to whom the application of the remedy is committed, instead of uniting to apply it, dissipate their powers by contending as to the means of application, doubtless the great, the crying sin rests with them. Let the Church of Christ shew to the world that it is superior to the prejudices which divide it; let us assume the attitude which becomes us as penitents: let there be a "holy order of mourners in Zion;" let us humble ourselves in the dust before Him whose honour our divisions have injured, and to the advance of whose cause they have opposed the most effectual obstruction. Let us mourn and lament them; let confession precede prayer, and prayer be poured forth from every contrite soul, that God would heal the bitter waters of our disunion by the salt of his grace, and grant us to go forth as one united company, "conquering and to conquer." Let the whole "land mourn," first, the Establishment, and "every family" of separation "apart," and then every soul, both Churchman and Dissenter, on one appointed fast of national humiliation. Let Ezra's prayer be that of every believer, "O

my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God.—O Lord God of Israel, thou art righteous : for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day : behold we are before thee in our trespasses : for we cannot stand before thee because of this.”¹

But is a different feeling really prevalent ? are we rather “ puffed up,” each confident of the superior excellence of his own persuasion, and therefore indisposed to make those concessions which might effect reconciliation and concurrence ? Our “ glorying is not good.”² Or has custom in evil begot indifference to its real character ? and has the inveteracy of habit confirmed us in disunion, and rendered all effort at reconciliation hopeless ? may the Spirit of God dissipate this delusion from the eyes of his Church ; may this solemn conviction of my soul be impressed upon every heart that feels for the honour of Christ, that the great crying sin of the land is the sin of the Church—disunion allowed and gloried in, cherished separation, separation unconfessed, unmourned, unrepented of by the Church at large, separation unconciliated on one hand, and proud of its distinctions on the other. May the spirit of boasting be exchanged for that of mourning, and if “ the Communion of the Saints ” has ever been regarded as the strength of the Church and the glory of her

¹ Ezra ix. 6, 15.

² 1 Cor. v. 6.

Head ; may all that tends to weaken that communion, and to tarnish that glory, be regarded as the bane of the Church ; and let every heart and hand combine in ardent prayer and persevering effort, to concede, to conciliate, and to unite.¹

Episcopalian Sanderson, Non-conformist Baxter, and Independent Owen were three cotemporaneous stars in the ecclesiastical firmament, who arose, each in his respective communion, amidst the darkness and confusion of their time. Each was largely accredited by the party he represented, and, from the circumstances of the times, each possessed an influence probably, which no single man at this day, however accredited, can hope to attain. They have left behind them writings of no common value for the perpetual edification of the Church. But

¹ The apostle had never called upon the Church of Corinth for a state of undissenting union had any moral impossibility existed to such condition. " Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you : but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment," 1 Cor. i. 10. May this and the two following chapters be the constant subject of meditation to every pious Churchman and Dissenter, and may their holy aspirations ascend to heaven in the following expressions ; " We beseech thee to inspire continually the universal Church with the spirit of truth, unity, and concord : and grant that all they that do confess thy holy name, may agree in the truth of thy holy word, and live in unity, and godly love."

valuable as their writings are, they had bequeathed to the Church a far richer legacy, had they combined, under God, in projecting some intelligible mean in which all parties might have concurred, and which, though unable to establish amidst the dissensions of their own times, their wisdom and piety might have commended to the acceptance of a less prejudiced posterity. Blessed, thrice blessed, shall that man be in my esteem, whom God shall honour in uniting his Church. I had rather be the happy instrument of advancing such a cause, though I laid but the smallest stone in the walls of the temple of peace, than enjoy all the fame of all the statesmen, and warriors, and philosophers, and poets, and orators, who, by conferring temporal benefits on their species, have ever attracted the admiration of mankind;—for the union of the Church is the sum of human blessedness; and the highest object at which human wisdom and human charity can aim, is to bring every man to the vital confession, “I am not of Paul, nor of Apollos, nor of Cephas, but of Christ.” It is then that the conquest of the world to its Saviour cannot be far distant; for then the power of the saints will no longer be dissipated in party contentions, but the whole blessed company marshalled under one banner, that of their common Lord, bold in the aggression of benevolence, and safe in the protection of the promise,

may go “up on the breadth of the earth,”¹ an irresistible combination of charity and power; “fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.”²

“O come hither” then, “ye that fear God,”³ every soul to whom the Saviour’s honour is dear, the welfare of the Church, or the salvation of your own soul; and while you pray for the peace of the Church, advance your own—“pray⁴ for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee.”⁵

ANOTHER ADVANTAGE directly resulting from this interpretation of our Baptismal Service, would be—**THE IMPROVEMENT OF GENERAL EDUCATION.** I have dropped some hints on this subject before, but its matchless importance demands a specific mention in this enumeration of Baptismal advantages.

And what a provision is here made for a spiritual education, while the Child is considered as “the child of God!” Let all his instruction have a reference to train him up in this charac-

¹ Rev. xx. 9.

² Song of Sol. vi. 10.

³ Psalm lxvi. 16.

⁴ Ibid. cxii. 6.

⁵ I see no reason why, one soul, who really honours Christ, should absent himself from this blessed company; the Anabaptist may unite himself in common with every real believer. It is related of Mr. Tombs, one of the most distinguished supporters of this persuasion in the seventeenth century, that he communicated with the Church at Salisbury to the end of his days.

ter, and I think it is plain that our present mode of education must be almost reversed, if the formation of a child as "the child of God" is to be proposed as the object of our attainment.

What is the object of Christian education? It is to prepare the soul and body of man for earth and for heaven. It is to infuse into the soul as a principle, and into the body as a habit, that "godliness" which "with contentment is" the truest "gain,"¹ the surest happiness, the most choice condition of human being, "having promise of the life that now is," as well as "of that which is to come."² The "soul's health" then is its great and ultimate object. Now there is one book which reveals the will of God on this subject. It is by the general consent of Christians clearly and confessedly a revelation from God, teaching us to secure the everlasting interest of our souls. Should not this Book, this Bible, be the grand subject of human regard? Should it not be in every heart and every mouth throughout the land, both of man and child, in every chamber and parlour, in every kitchen and cottage, in every palace and mansion, at every table, in every company, public and private, as the general charter of happiness temporal and spiritual, the rightful title to salvation of every

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 6.

² 1 Tim. iv. 8.

being that calls himself man, and that has a soul to be saved? Should it not be translated into every language for the general instruction of mankind? And while every nation hears in its own tongue "the wonderful works of God,"¹ should not the learning of every Christian land consist of the acquirement of those languages, in which the Holy Spirit pleased originally to express the terms of this charter? Should not those languages be taught in seminaries and schools and colleges, in which the middle and superior ranks are educated, as that which claims the first attention of childhood, after the acquirement of its own native tongue? Happily, the language of one portion of this Book was the vehicle of polite literature, and the common expression of the intercourse of civilized life, about the time when it was written: and we owe it to the wise disposal of the providence of God, that those productions of the human mind, which the taste of mankind has agreed to consider as most eminent exhibitions of cultivated fancy, of interesting history, of human prudence, or of just and liberal sentiment, have adopted this language of full and copious expression. There can be no doubt, that, as God in his providence, called out the family of Abraham, and selected the nation of the Jews from the people of the earth as the depositaries

¹ Acts ii. 11.

of his truth, the channel of his promises, and as the people in whose speech he would express his "lively oracles" under the Law, so that he equally raised up the states of Greece to literary and political eminence, distinguished their speech with rich and comprehensive expression, gave it celebrity and acceptance with the nations, and adapted it as the vehicle of his general proclamation of mercy under the Gospel. It is admitted that the study of the Greek language is general in the education of those who are considered as well-educated among us; but, may we judge from the general indifference which is shewn to the Hebrew portion of Revelation, must it not be equally admitted that our indifference to the Greek portion of it would be the same, did it afford no other charms than that it is the language of Revelation? Its poets, its orators, its philosophers, and its statesmen form the real charm; for can we hope that of the thousands who are trained to Greek literature the mass have ever studied the Greek volume of Revelation at all?¹ Assuredly the attention of the student is not stimulated by the reflection, that he is about to acquire the language, which it pleased God to distinguish

¹ It is a shrewd touch of the pencil in Law's masterly portrait of Classicus;—"The two Testaments would not have had so much as a place amongst his books, but that they are both to be had in Greek." "Serious Call."—Chap. xiv.

as the conveyance of the Gospel of salvation to his soul. The cultivation of the Greek language among us, as to its bearing on the sacred volume, seems to be rather incidental and secondary, than direct and primary. Now I apprehend that this must wholly be reversed; and that both Hebrew and Greek must have the decided preference in a Christian education after our native language, *because* they are the languages of Revelation, and let Latin as the language of translation, as well as that of a great part of the Primitive Church, succeed. If Hebrew can be approached by an Englishman without the aid of any intermediate language, why should not the Greek admit of the same direct access? and why is the Greek to be regarded as a distant province, like Galilee beyond Samaria, accessible only through the intervention of the Latin? It seems almost necessary to the comprehensive acquirement of language that we should be familiarised to it from our early years; and the method of imparting it by speech¹

¹ The rule must be posterior to the practice, and the thing analysed must precede the analysis. Homer first wrote an epic poem, before Aristotle analysed the *epopæia*; but Homer, and not Aristotle, formed Virgil and Milton. Analysis is necessary for critical accuracy; but practice is necessary for ready acquirement. I have heard that the young Jesuits now educating at Rome are taught the Latin language by speech; why should not our children enjoy the same privilege of learning with facility and delight? Surely it would be an act of

rather than by grammars and dictionaries, (or at least using them as subsidiaries) a method long since recommended by Locke, if added to the powerful principle, that we were acquiring language to promote the salvation of our souls, would give both facility and pleasure to the acquisition. Let the Bible then be in education as it is represented on the monument of Cowper : let it stand upright in the midst, and all human effort, like his book supporting the Bible, uphold and maintain it. Let it draw all its principles from it, and refer all its usefulness to it. The Bible languages will then be learned for the purpose of illustrating the Bible ; and real learning will then consist not in the mere knowledge of Greek poets and historians, but in the application of this knowledge to the attainment of that of a far higher order, even that of immortal truth ; from which their ideas are for the most part so grossly abhorrent, to which indeed they commonly serve as a foil, but of which God has chosen their language as the expressive vehicle. The Bible will then be the chief school book : the sum of literary attainment will be its languages ; and the sum of classical wisdom will be the spiritually intellectual comprehension of its truths. There

patriotism, worthy of the first classical scholars in the kingdom, to devote themselves to this mode of communicating the knowledge of the languages.

will not then be a chapter occasionally read as a task, and the book coldly laid aside, and all recollection of its contents immediately superseded by the study of classical mythology ; but all study of arts and sciences as well as that of the classics will have a reference to it ; it will be the commanding centre in which all the rays of knowledge converge, and from which they will all be receiving light, and usefulness, and blessing.

The mischievous tendency of mythological learning in corrupting the mind from the simplicity of truth, seems to be an evil very rarely admitted among us. We resemble those who reside in an idolatrous land, where the symbols of idolatry become so familiar, that what was at first disgust, soon fades into indifference, till it sinks into passive infidelity. Mythology has been so much mixed up with our learning, habits, education, allusions, and conversation, that we do not only express ourselves in its language, but it has usurped a dominion over the whole region of thought. We think in mythology ; we even debase Scripture subjects by mythological illustration. Nor is this idolatrous ascendancy apparent in minds of common order alone ; it invades the originality and independence of the most commanding intellect among us. May I venture to instance this in the almost superstitious respect paid to "the wisdom of the antients," by our great master

of human science himself. If the recondite sense, which he ascribes to the mythological fables of Greece, was really apprehended by their original authors and their disciples, assuredly neither the people at large, nor even their poets and historians, seem to have received them in this sense. And he who judges from the complexion of their writings which are extant, will be rather induced to conclude, that the system is more indebted to the ingenious speculations of the modern interpreter, than to the wisdom and design of the original inventor. Surely the name of Bacon has given a celebrity to mythology, to which its practice neither by priests, nor poets, nor philosophers, nor even the best and wisest professors of heathen idolatry can justly entitle it.¹ If I admire Milton for the sublimity of his genius, I admire him more for that bold independence, which enabled him to

¹ Though Lucian and Juvenal laughed outright at the absurdities of Paganism, Homer and Virgil seem to pay its deities the highest respect in their writings : they are the objects of solemn prayer and adoration, and are evidently introduced to accredit the character of their heroes, and to procure them veneration. Nor does it appear, that Homer intended any disrespect to this mythological machinery, when he could transfer it with so much ease from men to frogs and mice ; as when Minerva is represented as declining to assist either party, on account of the offence they have respectively given her ; the frogs, having so disturbed her night's rest after a hard day's toil, that she rose in the morning with a head-

think for himself, and to rise above the bad taste, and mental thraldom of his day. And yet what but even his slavery to the prejudices of a mythological education, has led him too often to give a low and debasing tendency to those exhibitions of Christianity which are among the most admirable efforts of human talent ? I will mention one out of many by way of illustration. After describing the fall of Satan under the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, as it proceeded from the lips of the victorious Saviour ; the subject suddenly sinks into the ridiculous by the following comparison :—

ach ; and the mice having gnawed holes in her favourite gown, the cost of repairing which exceeded her means.

Nor can the practical idolatry of Socrates be answered, by interpreting his desire with his dying breath, that a cock might be sacrificed to Esculapius, as though it were an ironical condemnation of his country's superstition. The conclusion of the Phædon is as follows. “ He (Socrates) said, and they were his last words, “ Crito, we owe a cock to Esculapius ; discharge the debt therefore, and by no means neglect it.” “ Your request shall be performed,” said Crito, “ but consider whether you have no other to make.” To this inquiry he made no reply, &c.—“ Such, Echecrates, was the death of our friend, a man, the best in our esteem, with whom we were then acquainted, and eminently the most wise and just.”

There is nothing here that looks like a smile ; all is serious and sober, all, that to a heathen mind would befit the solemnity of the occasion : and if such was the idolatrous confidence of the best and wisest among them, what must have been that of the mass ?

" As when Earth's Son Antæus, (to compare
Small things with greatest) in Irassia strove
With Jove's Alcides," &c.¹

The bathos, and bad taste, and absurdity of the allusion seem to have been so evident to the Poet himself, that he was fearful of writing it, without an express apology ; yet so inveterate was his love of mythology, that his better taste, if not his piety, must yield to the barbarous prejudice. Our idea of the restless importunity of the author of evil can gain no impression from the most desperate obstinacy of any " Son of

¹ " Paradise Regain'd, b. iv. l. 563.—When Milton speaks from the lips of INCARNATE TRUTH he rises above fashion and prejudice, and gives a just estimate of the productions of heathen philosophers and orators :

OF PHILOSOPHERS.

" Alas ! what can they teach, and not mislead,
Ignorant of themselves, of God much more,
And how the world began, and how man fell
Degraded by himself, on grace depending ?"

Book iv. l. 309

OF ORATORS.

" Their orators thou then extoll'st, as those
The top of eloquence, statists indeed,
And lovers of their country, as may seem ;
But herein to our prophets far beneath,
As men divinely taught, and better teaching
The solid rules of civil government
In their majestic unaffected stile,
Than all th' oratory of Greece and Rome."

Book iv. l. 353.

Earth ; " and assuredly the firm, and mild, and undismayed perseverance in rectitude, of the Author of Redemption can gain no intenseness of elevation from any comparison with Hercules, however esteemed as the model of heathen excellency and virtue. What a farrago of inconsistency must the sixth book of the " Paradise Lost" appear, to a simple mind well-versed in Scripture, but unversed in mythology and romance ! Founded on a misapplication of Scripture, human warfare is introduced among the inhabitants of heaven ; and the spiritual is levelled with the material world. Amidst the hurling of mountains, and firing of cannon, and jokes and quibbles, where is the heaven or the hell that this simple man reads of in Scripture ? He has read of war in heaven, but this he spiritually interprets as war in the kingdom of Christ upon earth ; how can he think of war in that heaven, where Jehovah dwells in all his perfections, and where the violation of one of these perfections consigns Satan, by one word, and all his rebellious host, to " the blackness of darkness for ever ? " ¹ Surely nothing but our blind admiration of mythology, and its sister romance, could induce us, as Christians, to consider this jumble of incongruities, this confusion of " all monstrous, all prodigious things," wild and impracticable as the Poet's own chaos, as consistent

¹ Jude 13.

with just taste, and its inseparable companion, sound sense, and Christian simplicity.¹ The classical literature of Christian England, has legitimated these Pagan and Gothic absurdities ; and they have assumed a moral and intellectual empire over us, the degrading and demoralizing influence of which, is apparent from the most refined admirer of the taste of antient Greece in its poets, and sculptors, and philosophers, to the less refined beholder, to whose eyes heathen deities and heathen customs are palpably exhibited at our public theatres and *spectacles*. Perhaps the most effectual instrument by which Satan is heathenizing Christendom at this day, is by securing our idolatrous admiration of heathen sentiments, and heathen taste. We are absolute slaves to the exquisite taste of Greece and Rome ; and are unconsciously immolating piety at the shrine of refinement. We are in fact practical Papists under the influence of Pagan associations ; and we seem to want only the machinery of Popery around us, and the transit from Pagan to Popish superstition would be complete.

And now, My Dear Friend, can it be a cause of wonder to any reflecting mind, that pure Christianity is so little apparent in the habits

¹ From this failure of Milton, it is evident, that the highest order of human talent cannot depart from the plain sense of Scripture, without degrading the character of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

and sentiments of a professedly Christian population, when we are habitually educated in this idolatrous veneration of Pagan writers and Pagan sentiments? It is equally apparent that if England is indeed to be a partaker of genuine Christianity, this Baal of mythological lore must be removed from the throne of its usurpation; and that the learning of Greece and Rome must no longer be regarded as the primary objects of Christian education, but assume that subordinate and secondary place which is its due as the handmaid of revelation, and the assistant of truth. Nor do I see any mode of return to Christian education but that offered in the above interpretation of our Baptismal Service; which beginning in infancy, having the "soul's health" continually in view, and proceeding in faithful confidence of success, on the warrant of divine promise, builds up a Christian man. And till education proceed on this principle, is there any hope rational or divine, that Christian graces shall adorn a Christian education, or that the effects of education should be otherwise than as at present,—that "thistles should grow instead of wheat, and cockle instead of barley."¹

Nor let us shut our eyes to the signs of our times on the subject of education. Assuredly our present mode of conducting it, is regarded by many as quite unequal to the intellectual,

¹ Job xxxi 40.

and by others to the religious demands, of the day in which we live. There seem to be two descriptions of *Utilists* among us; by which I mean, those, who propose not the mere acquisition of learning, but the fruitful issue of it in practical usefulness as the object of education. These consist of the foregoing descriptions, mere intellectual and practical political economists, and religious men who consider Christianity as the sum of real utility. Many powerful efforts have been made by the latter, to evangelise the country, by improved publications proceeding on religious principle, addressed to all ages and classes; to which they have laboured to give the largest practical effect by Sunday and other schools, and by adopting the improved modes of education which have distinguished our times. In many of these efforts, the former class, who have but little regard for the principles of any particular school, as Christianity is cheaply considered by them, willingly concur. Their common aim is usefulness. This combined exertion has been felt throughout the community; but more especially among the poor, and those powerful classes of moral agency, so largely dispersed over this country of equal rights and privileges which rank immediately above them. Hence "a mighty mass of intellect" has been stimulated into active operation; and, as it appears to me, the improvement has been most felt, where the effort has been most

largely directed, among the poor and the classes immediately above them. But here it cannot stop ; and it must have been long evident to every reflecting mind that it could not stop here. The introduction of a more useful education among the superior ranks, has doubtless been long in contemplation ; and since the long-instituted and accredited schools of general learning, have not proceeded in improving their systems, with the rapidity which the moral and intellectual demands of the day seemed to require ; a University, in the very heart of our population, is now proposed as the most effectual mode of introducing an improved general education. No man who has watched the progress of mind for the last thirty years, and the unequal exertions of the usual schools of education to keep pace with this progress, will be surprised at this effort of improving knowledge to expand and to establish itself throughout the community. The object of this institution, so far as I can comprehend it, appears to be not only to impart knowledge as knowledge, of whatever kind it may be, but to render such knowledge useful to the common purposes of life. It is not to teach theory only, but theory for the purpose of practice ; it is to make arts useful, and science practical. It proposes, therefore, not merely to store the head with knowledge, but to exercise the faculties to the reproduction of that knowledge to the benefit of life. It is not mere

desirous of improving the means of conveying instruction to the mind, than it is desirous of cultivating those powers by which it should re-appear as practical wisdom on the lip and in the hand. With this view, it is said, the common comforts and advantages both of public and private life are to be increased, and that most efficient agent of influence, the power of speech, is to be especially cultivated and improved. And indeed what is it that makes the difference between men in the conduct of human affairs? not so much the existence of more or less information in the head, as the ready facility with which the competent information that a man has, is brought to bear on the business in hand. A ready utterance, is indispensable for a man of influence: and he who possesses it, though but moderately stored with knowledge, will be found more equal to the common business of life, and more influential in his station usually, than the man of far greater stores of knowledge and far higher powers of intellect, whose habits have been more those of study than of utterance. Extemporaneous expression is power:¹ it is power which is immediately felt

¹ It is recorded by the biographer of Themistocles among the many qualifications that facilitated his rise at Athens—“celeriterque quæ opus erant, reperiebat, facile eadem oratione explicabat.” An acute apprehension of what the occasion demands, and a facility of uttering the same in appropriate language, are among the leading qualifications of a useful

and acknowledged ; and as speech is that ready faculty by which the stores of knowledge are expressed, and made available to the purposes of every day's life ; so the marked cultivation of this faculty will form, it is said, one grand object of this new effort of the *Utilists*. And is not this wisdom ? It is not the bale laid up in the warehouse, or deposited in the vessel, that is the wealth of the country ; but it is the industry which reproduces it, " with its ten thousand wheels," its looms, its engines, its countless hands busied in every diversified manufacture, that constitutes our commercial wealth. So it is not knowledge stored in the brain in unthinking repose, but knowledge reflecting, busy, meditative, knowledge habituated to instant re-production, talent " occupied," mind traded with, and employed in hourly engagement, issuing in ready utterance, that constitutes the useful man. And when to this great object we add the advantages which must accrue to this new system from the adoption of the improvements in education which modern ingenuity has devised, a very considerable effect must be expected to flow from such a system actively operating in a rich and populous metropolis.

character. And what spoiled the usefulness of this unprincipled Athenian ? The absence of that principle of holiness—Christ crucified—which alone can sanctify talent, and make it a blessing to its possessor, his family, his country, and the world.

Yet much as we feel disposed to encourage every attempt to cultivate intellect, we cannot forget that it will be a curse or a blessing as moral improvement accompanies it. The keener the edge of the sword, the more severe is the wound it inflicts ; its keenness is profitable or not according to the character of the hand that wields it. What Christian then must not pause, in aiding this attempt, when he learns that Christianity is not to be the paramount or even an acknowledged part of this system ? I know that it may be said, "Christianity may be learned at home, according to the creed of each particular sect ; and the endless divisions among Christians, give us little hope, that education would be left to its unfettered play, were any particular mode of Christian profession adopted." While, as a Christian, I feel, with grief, that our divisions have afforded too much ground for this remark, as a Christian I cannot but feel it an unjust visitation on our infirmities, that the inspired system of yet disproved Revelation should either be excluded from the plan, or that Christ should only be permitted to designate a class, in common with Plato, and Aristotle, and Zeno. Our own defective mode of education, but too amply proves at present, that if Christianity be not paramount, mythology or infidelity must be ; and we have gained but little from the experience of the last forty years, if we have not learned, that the pruriency of human

talent unsanctified by truth, and the pride of mental expansion unprincipled by revelation, will ever produce a misery the more intense as it is the more refined; and under the plea of superior wisdom, and an unprescriptive liberality, will more effectually rebarbarise mankind, than all the grossness of ignorance or the infantine weakness of superstition. While then we fully concur in the desire to render education more general and more useful, let us listen to the apprehension which dreads our rendering it more unchristian. And if intellectual *Utilists* are more active in the cultivation of mere talent, let Christian *Utilists* be tenfold more active in sanctifying talent with the principles of truth. Whatever may become of this project (and may God in mercy defeat it, if it tend not to the honour of his Son) we are fairly committed in the race, and I have no doubt as to the issue, for “the Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge”¹ and our support. But I own that I see no means equal to the achievement of the conquest, but those which our Church presents us in the practical application of the above interpretation of our Baptismal Service. Seminaries, and schools, and the ordinary modes of influencing the public mind, must for years be unequal as means. It is the nursery which must reform the school,

¹ Psalm xlii. 7.

and it is Baptismal regeneration, proceeding on the free promise of grace, that must reform the nursery: and since no such reform can take place without the influence of the Spirit on the word, may it be our fervent prayer that the Holy Spirit would inspire the Pulpit with the truth and efficacy of the promise; and that all our people may hear, with unabated urgency, that it is only by believing the promise that they can hope for success,—that “ except they believe, surely they shall not be established.”

Am I too pressing on this subject of education? Or have I urged the consideration of it with unbecoming frequency or fervency? I know not that I can overpress the subject. For “ tis education forms the common mind,” all over the earth, from the exquisite refinement of the Professor’s chair, to the blood-nurtured and scalp-fed ferocity of the North-American plains. As our children are, such will our adults be: and what rational man can hope for adult Christians from our present nurseries and schools of mythology and romance? A new object must be proposed, a new principle must be applied, and new means must be brought into action, before the day of Christian education can arise: and such are the clouds of prejudice which obscure the way of improvement, that as nothing but a divine power can induce the minds of men to attempt the change, so nothing but the warrant of a divine promise can encourage the

most sanguine to hope for it. This promise we have, together with all the means of effecting it, in our Baptismal privileges as above interpreted; faith alone is wanting on our part to set the whole gracious machine in motion, and all its blessings shall be ours—“Lord, help our unbelief.”¹

ANOTHER ADVANTAGE afforded by the above interpretation is, that—IT COMPLETELY VINDICATES THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION FROM ALL THE CHARGES AND MISREPRESENTATIONS WHICH HAVE LONG ENCUMBERED THIS MOST LOVELY AND PRACTICAL DOCTRINE OF OUR CHURCH: a doctrine which she herself states as the source of every spiritual blessing, and as “full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons.”

Admit only that “in every person born into this world,” original sin—the “infection of his nature,” “deserveth God’s wrath and damnation,” and that it is the good pleasure of God “to deliver from curse and damnation” any portion of those thus infected, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation,—and the conclusion is inevitable; there is an “election of grace.”²

And is there any doctrine of the Bible fraught with comforts so intelligible, and so suitable as this is to every sinner groaning under “this

¹ Mark ix. 24.

² Rom. xi. 5.

infection of" his "nature," acknowledging that it "deserves God's wrath and damnation," and that without mercy he is utterly undone? To be saved by mercy—mere mercy, mercy requiring nothing from him but misery,—a condition affording scope and correlative fitness, on which to display its own blessedness, is that which just suits his utterly graceless and godless state: his own emptiness affords him capacity to receive the fulness of God. There is no good thing in him; his nature revolts from God; his heart rebels against his law; his will opposes the divine will; and there is no spiritual health in him: he has nothing in him congenial with God; nothing of similarity that encourages approach. He sees no virtue in himself that is to induce the countenance of God; he is by nature the child of wrath even as others; he is "dead in trespasses and sins;"¹ and if any inducement of divine regard is required in himself, where is it to be found in one who "is of his own nature inclined to evil," and whose "flesh" instead of possessing any kindred dispositions, "lusteth always contrary to the Spirit?" It is to nothing then but the good pleasure of God, to which he can look for salvation; even of that God, who, "rich in mercy," loved him when he was "dead in sins;"² who saw no inducement to save him but what he found in the good plea-

¹ Eph. ii. 1.

² Ibid, ii. 4, 5.

sure of his own will, that will being determined to magnify mercy in the freedom of its choice, irrespective of any thing in the creature, but the misery which could alone qualify him as the recipient of mercy. And that he is called out from a “world lying in wickedness,¹ is owing to nothing but his being “called with a holy calling,” even the effectual operation of the Spirit influencing his soul to “receive the reconciliation,”² and “not according to his works, but according to” God’s “own purpose and grace, which was given” him “in Christ Jesus before the world began.”³ Thus he is emptied of self. Here is the largest provision for humility ; for God has chosen him on account of his own nothingness and vileness, to display in him the riches of his grace ; and holy joy, and admiring gratitude, and constraining love, press every faculty of soul and body into the most unreserved and devoted service of Him, by whom he is so richly redeemed, and so gratuitously preserved.

And now, My Dear Friend, what doctrine is so truly lovely, so truly cheering to a heart-broken sinner as this ; to one who comes in faith of the general promise, “Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out ;”⁴ and who feels that “the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit,” and that “a broken and a contrite

¹ 1 John v. 19. ² Rom. v. 71. ³ 2 Tim. i. 9. ⁴ John vi. 37.

heart" he "will not despise?"¹ It is the self-emptied heart that can alone be the vessel of grace; mercy uncaused but by the divine goodness, unoriginated but in the divine love, is just adapted to the case of him in whom "dwelleth no good thing;"² and that he is the subject of the free choice of his God, animates his love, supports his hope, secures his perseverance, quickens his zeal, invigorates his obedience, and causes him to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing."³

And is not this the very mode in which our Church improves this blessed doctrine to the edification and comfort of her people? It is as the elect of God, that election being manifested in the promise made to the offspring of faithful Parents that the Child is introduced into the Church at Baptism; he is an elect of God before such introduction, and comes to this Sacrament, as Abraham to Circumcision, as the sign and seal of that faith which he had being yet unbaptised; he is then declared to be an elect of God, the Church praying that he "may ever remain in the number of" his "faithful and elect children:" he is invested with all the privileges of God's elect; he is regenerated by the Holy Spirit, he is received as God's own child by adoption, and he is incorporated into the communion of his holy Church; as such he

¹ Ps. li. 17.

² Rom. vii. 18.

³ Col. i. 10.

grows up “**a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven ;**” and the Holy Ghost “sanctifieth” or is sanctifying him in common with “all the elect people of God.” And, as I have already shewn, from his introduction into the Church at Baptism,

- to his earthly departure at his burial, he is uniformly and consistently throughout all her formularies, without exception, considered as invested with the privileges of an elect of God. The Church never once foregoes this view of his character : election is the life and soul of all her formularies ; the most useful and necessary doctrine upon which all her Christian communion is built ; it is the parent of her holy calling, her justification, her adoption, her sanctification, her religious walk, and her final glorification. Deprive the formularies of the Church of England of the rich essence of electing love, and they at once become a dead letter, a body without sense or feeling, a carcase without spirit and without soul.

And does not our Church in this respect follow the footsteps of her venerable Mother, **THE WORD OF GOD ?** What is the doctrine, which, as the soul that animates it, or the very atmosphere that it breathes, runs through and distinguishes the whole word of God from beginning to end, but this doctrine of election ? It is the grand practical principle on which the whole Book founds its usefulness and adaptability to the

spiritual wants of our lost race. I know, and I do most sincerely deplore it, for the truth's sake, and for our own sake, for whose salvation this blessed truth is given, that it is the fashion of the present day to deny this statement ; and to represent that it is only found occasionally ; and that it bears no proportion in the sacred page to other more necessary doctrines. But what says King Edward the Sixth's Catechism of that Holy Church, which was “ fore-chosen, predestinated, and appointed out to everlasting life ? ” The Scholar says, “ I will rehearse that in few words shortly, which the Holy Scriptures *set out at large and plentifully.*”¹ What is the Holy Church but “ God’s elect,” “ which the Holy Scriptures set out at large and plentifully ? ” And may we not further collect the opinion of our Reformers on this question, when the fullest, the largest, and most elaborate of our doctrinal Articles is on this subject ; and when the term “ elect ” is admitted into many of our formularies, and its spirit is implied in all ? Has there not been from the beginning a Holy Church distinguished from, and called out of a sinful world ? Did not “ the faith of God’s elect,”² distinguish righteous Abel from murderous Cain ? Were there not in the old world “ sons of God ” and “ daughters of men ? ”³ Did not God “ save

¹ See the whole passage, p. 131. ² Tit. i. 1. ³ Gen. vi. 2.

Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly ? ”¹ And what is the call of Abraham, and all God’s peculiar mercies to his family, in whom all the nations of the world were to be blessed, but one continued evidence of God’s electing love to his people ? Was not the Holy Church confined by God to a single family nearly, from generation to generation, for nineteen hundred years, during the whole of which season the nations of the world were ordered in his providence with especial reference to his Church ? “ When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance ; when he separated the sons of Adam ” into several nations, did he not “ set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel ? ” Was not the “ Lord’s portion his people, and Jacob the lot of his inheritance,”² so that he was ever among the nations as “ a garden inclosed,—a spring shut up, a fountain sealed ? ”³ and was not the oath of distinction that God “ sware unto Abraham ” the constant topic of privilege pleaded by the Church in all her difficulties and trials ? and to shew that the election was not merely national and regarded temporal promises only, was there not even among these an “ Israel of God,”⁴ and an “ Israel after the flesh.”⁵

¹ 2 Pet. ii. 5. ² Deut. xxxii. 8, 9. ³ Song of Sol. iv. 12.

⁴ Gal. vi. 16. ⁵ 1 Cor. x. 18.

The Jewish HISTORY is one continued tissue of electing love and distinguishing mercy.

Jewish SACRED BIOGRAPHY, is a succession of the saints of God, marked out for mercy, and assured of his unfailing love.

Jewish PROPHECY, is nothing more, than the gradual developement of electing grace to the Church of God. Without election prophecy is a nullity.

Jewish HAGIOGRAPHY abounds in a sense of electing privileges ; they are the very soul of the holy aspirations of “ the Sweet Psalmist of Israel.”¹ If he calls “ out of the depths ” at the beginning of his psalm, at the conclusion of it he arrives at a holy assurance, “ He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.”² He tells us in his first psalm of the security of the “ Blessed ” of God ; “ his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” This sense of privilege pervades the whole book, till it swells into one mighty chorus of praise, in the seven psalms which conclude his rapturous devotions, and in which he celebrates the final triumph of the Church, “ Such honour have all his saints.”³ In the preceptive parts of the Hagiography, from the nature of the subject, the doctrine is not so apparent ; but the Song of Solomon is almost an unceasing illustration of it.

What is it that comforts the PROPHETS under

¹ 2 Sam. xxiii. 1.

² Psalm cxxx.

³ Ibid, cxlix. 9.

the desolating wickedness of their respective times, but that God had a chosen people in the midst of abounding infidelity? and while the forgetfulness of this doctrine of election was Elijah's misery in the wilderness in his day, when he said "I, even I only am left;"¹ Isaiah was comforted by it in his day, declaring that "except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom and we should have been like unto Gomorrah."² And what were the "visions of glory" which animated their souls, but, that in God's good time, "a little one" should "become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation,"³ till all people, kindred, nations, and tongues became the elect people of God?

This same blessed doctrine of distinguishing mercy is the very life's blood of the NEW TESTAMENT also. The genealogy of our Lord contains instances of particular and personal election; and though it is not so conspicuous in the three first Gospels, in the last it meets us with peculiar prominence, from the beginning to the end; so that if the colloquial part of St. John's Gospel could be inserted in any intelligible harmony throughout the three former Gospels, election would appear to form no small portion in our Lord's addresses.

The gathering of the Church in the "Acts of

¹ 1 Kings xix. 10.

² Isa. i. 9.

³ Ibid, ix. 22.

THE APOSTLES" abounds both in the spirit and expression of distinguishing grace; and is but one continual exhibition of "the Lord adding to the Church—such as should be saved."¹

Throughout the EPISTLES the same doctrine largely prevails; but more especially its sweet and comforting spirit develops itself, in all its richness and peculiar blessedness, in the examples of those tried and God-devoted men, who were inspired by the Holy Ghost to write them; and in their consolation most abundantly to console the Church through all ages. And in that one Epistle² which gives a systematic delineation of the doctrines, privileges, and precepts of our faith, electing grace has surely its full proportion of prominence: in the chapter of privileges³ it enjoys its full share in perfecting the enumeration of blessings, and of the whole Epistle it occupies a complete fifth part even in the letter, besides being the soul and essence which quickens the whole into spiritual meaning, from the first verse, in which the Apostle describes himself as "separated unto the Gospel of God," to the benediction which closes the epistle.

And what is the REVELATION OF ST. JOHN, but a disclosure of distinguishing mercy to the Church from the time of the Revelation, to that hour, when the encompassed "camp of the saints and the beloved city" are finally

¹ Acts ii. 47. ² St. Paul to the Romans. ³ Rom. viii.

and everlastingly delivered, " and the devil that deceived them " is " cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever ? " ¹

What is the Holy Church from the first to the last saint which shall be gathered in, but the congregation of God's elect—" a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people," ² whom he has selected to set forth the glory of his grace upon earth, and who, when gathered from the four winds at " that day," shall constitute the glory of the Redeemer's triumph in heaven ?

I am well aware, My Dear Friend, that as we are able to apprehend the preciousness of the doctrines of grace, so shall we discover this blessed doctrine throughout the Scriptures. To one person there would be no hint of the existence of this doctrine, in God's selecting the widow woman of Sarepta to " sustain " his prophet ; while to another, it might be evident, and he might preach the doctrine of election so plainly from it, as to endanger his life from the intolerance of his exasperated auditors. ³ It must ever be thus in this divinely inspired volume : the glorious truths of which are not revealed to reason but to faith ; and the discovery of which is not made to learning, or talents, or acquire-

¹ Rev. xx. 9, 10.

² 1 Peter ii. 9.

³ Luke iv. 29.

ments, but to a humble spirit and a contrite heart, which are “in the sight of God of great price.”¹

I am not ignorant of the objections which may be opposed to this statement, and of that main battery, so much relied on of late, that if I turn my face to the north, my back must necessarily be to the south,—that if I hold election I must hold reprobation also : and I am prepared to be told, even by yourself, that the admission of the former doctrine necessarily implies the admission of the latter. But whatever the reasonings of man may urge on this head, (and he has but a confined view of the question, who does not admit that the difficulties on every side of it are such as utterly to confound the reason of the most acute) or whatever private opinion I may hold, I am happily preserved by the wisdom of our Church, from the necessity of making any declaration on the subject. The Church requires of me, in no place that I am aware of, any such declaration. She mentions indeed more than once in her Homilies “the elect and reprobate,” but as a minister of her ordinances, she no where demands my opinion on the doctrine. She does indeed require of me an explicit avowal of my belief in the doctrine of election ; for she cannot move a step without it : it is on this that all her blessings are founded from our entrance into her communion to our departure from it : she

¹ 1 Peter iii. 4.

holds it therefore *explicitly* in the most comprehensive and the most exquisitely finished of her doctrinal Articles, and *implicitly* throughout all her formularies as we have repeatedly seen? She asks of me then a plain declaration of my belief in this doctrine, as a necessary and indispensable requisite to my admission into her ministry: but while in her fairness and in her justice she demands this; in her charity, she leaves me at large as to any avowal on the doctrine of reprobation. Here then I take refuge against all such objections under the broad shield of the discretion of our Church. She sees no necessity of asking me for my subscription to the doctrine of reprobation, but she does ask me for an honest approbation of the doctrine of election, and she will not admit me into her ministry on any other terms. I oppose then her wisdom, and her charity, and her sound example, to all that modern Socinianism, and modern ratiocination may urge against my consistency on this head. The wisest perhaps and the most liberal Church in the world, sees no inconsistency in requiring my belief in the doctrine of election, leaving me to the full enjoyment of my own discretion on the subject of reprobation. And this appears to me to be the wisest answer that a Clergyman of our United Church can give, when charged with the apparent inconsistency of holding one of these doctrines without the other. On this ground he is impregnable. As

a Churchman then addressing a Churchman, it is enough for me to plead the requisitions of the Church to which we belong; and as she sees no inconsistency, in requiring an explicit approbation of the doctrine of election from those who subscribe her Articles, but leaves a similar avowal on the doctrine of reprobation to their discretion, I feel it sufficient to say, "I desire to be a consistent Churchman, and if you charge me with inconsistency, I leave my defence to the tried wisdom, and piety, and charity of our Church."

And surely, My Dear Friend, I want not a fair inducement to this confidence, when I see this blessed doctrine exhibited throughout her formularies, both in letter and spirit, in all the beauty and loveliness in which it appears in the Scriptures of salvation. What is there discoverable in this doctrine of election, as applied to a fallen and helpless sinner, but what is animating and encouraging? Let us attempt to do something like justice to this long-neglected and abused "Daughter of Eternity." But who can touch upon this "good pleasure" of Jehovah's "will," this "praise of the glory of his grace,"¹ without crying out, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"² who can express it without its receiving "a taint from mortal lips, at best impure?" He best honours it, who most enjoys

¹ Ephes. i. 5, 6.

² Rom. xi. 33.

it. It was not given to reason about, but to enjoy: and may I not confidently ask, what is there in this gracious doctrine that does not abound in blessings to apostate man? man “yet the sinner”—“without strength”—“ungodly”¹—the subject of the free choice of his God, that choice exhibited in almost irresistible blessedness in the “Son of his love”²—what is there here to daunt, to terrify, or to repel? is there not on the contrary all to invite, to encourage, and to exhilarate? Where is the Gospel lovely if it is not so here? where is Christianity truly blessed if it is not so here? and where is God truly admirable, adorable, and amiable, but as he is here intelligible, suitable, accessible, desirable, and enjoyable? I grant, that, preached as election too commonly is, *didactically*, and as a dry doctrine without feeling and without experience, it is too frequently repulsive; and I lament, that a doctrine so truly honourable to God, and suitable to man, should have been so grossly distorted on the rack of controversy; but look at it as illustrated by our Church, the ground of her communion, the stay of her communion, the consummation of her communion; and what is there in it but the richest consolation and encouragement? Use it as our Church does, for the purpose for which it is revealed, and it is the sweet solace of the believing soul,

¹ Rom. v. 6.

² Coloss. i. 13.

and the buoyant support of the contrite spirit ; taking its rise in an eternal fountain, flowing in a rich stream of abundant mercies through the commotions, the “ sea ”¹ of time, and arriving at its full confluence of blessedness in the ocean of eternal glory.

Perhaps you will say, it would be better to omit the mention of election altogether, as it is a subject of which most are impatient, and it may prejudice the candid perusal of your book. My Dear Friend, if I was aware of one sentiment or one expression, throughout these pages, unnecessarily offensive, I can assure you, that my own hand should be the first to erase it ; for I am convinced that if I do not display the spirit of the Gospel, as well as its letter, I can hope for no blessing from him, to whose sole glory it is my desire to devote this weak effort to declare his grace. But if I omit election, if I do not bring it forward with a conspicuous prominence, as the very basis on which all practical grace is founded, I do indeed, in my own apprehension, deprive the tree of its root, the building of its corner-stone, and the body of the very soul that quickens it. I cannot, I dare not omit it, till the Church of Christ has another Bible, and the Church of England another Liturgy. In my view, they both consistently and harmoniously derive all their blessings from this doctrine : and had we but faith to train up our children

¹ Rev. xxi. 1.

according to our Baptismal Service, in the free promise of a Covenant-God, the doctrine of election would be practically illustrated in all its beauty, usefulness, and glory, to the truest welfare of man, and the highest honour of God.

I cannot but conclude this subject with the rapturous expression of Hooker : “ Blessed for ever and ever be that mother’s child, whose faith hath made him the child of God.”¹

ANOTHER and most manifest ADVANTAGE of this interpretation of our Baptismal Service, is, that—IT HONOURS GOD IN THAT WHICH IS MOST DEAR TO HIM, “ THE PRAISE OF THE GLORY OF HIS GRACE.”²

“ No man hath quickened his own soul ; ”³ salvation therefore is from the Lord in its rise, in its progress, and in its end. Preventing grace comes from God, by which grace originates in the soul ; co-operating grace is equally from him, by which daily habits of holiness are formed ; and crowning grace is from him, by which grace is matured in glory. Man is no mere machine in this matter ; but all the faculties of his soul, being born again by the Spirit, are inclined to good, as they were by his natural birth inclined to evil ; and they all now make “ increase with the increase of God.”⁴ And as

¹ The whole passage applies here with most appropriate force. See the conclusion of his “ Learned discourse on the certainty and perpetuity of faith in the Elect.”

² Eph. i. 6.

³ Ps. xxii. 30.

⁴ Col. ii. 19.

the believer is now “renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him,”¹ so God has ordained the means of grace, by the efficacy of which that image should be maintained and improved. Now as grace is free in its bestowment, it is equally free in the appointment of means, by which it pleases God to bestow it. No man is entitled to say, why has God connected grace with the cutting of the flesh, as in Circumcision, or with the washing the body with water, as in Baptism. A Sacrament is “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us,” and “ordained by Christ himself,” as the “means” of imparting his grace, “and a pledge to assure us” that we possess it : and it is ours, not with Nicodemus to say, “how can these things be ? ”² but to close in with the offer of grace, to accept it as our own on the ground of the promise, to believe the word of him who in mercy has appointed it, and to honour his grace by faith in his word. As our faith improves the means, so shall faith derive the blessing.

Now God has given repeated promises of blessing generally to believers and to their children : and our Lord Jesus Christ has concentrated the force of all previous promises in that promissive invitation, and actual conferring of its blessings, when he said “Suffer the little

¹ Col. iii. 10.

² John iii. 9.

children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God,"—“ and he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them and blessed them ; ” and in the united strength of this promise and performance of the Saviour, our Church encourages the Sponsors, “ ye have heard also that our Lord Jesus Christ hath promised in his Gospel to grant all these things that ye have prayed for, which promise he for his part will most surely keep and perform.” We are required then to act “ to the praise of the glory of ” the “ grace ” of God, and to honour this grace by accepting it.

First, we are to honour his promise by believing it. I deem it quite unnecessary, after what has been so repeatedly urged as to the number and reality of the promises to the children of believers, to adduce any further particulars on this head. I take it for granted, that God has given us these “ exceeding great and precious promises : ” and he calls upon us to give him credit for his kindness, to be just to his mercy, to confide in his grace, and to improve his love by believing them ; by real faith to apply a real blessing, and to appropriate these rich covenant-mercies, as belonging to ourselves and to our Children to a thousand generations.

Secondly, he calls upon us to honour his grace by observing that Saerament which he has appointed as the seal and sign of it. If we question, we doubt ; and if we doubt, we dis-

honour God. Faith only is the instrument of conveying the blessing. It is faith which gives all its energy to the Sacrament, for it is faith which gives all the honour to God, by accepting all the blessing from him. To doubt is to destroy : it is to reduce the Sacrament to a ceremony, and to deprive it of its virtue. Faith gives vital application to every Sacrament ; "Doubt ye not therefore but earnestly believe," says the Church : she is throughout the service animating the faith of the whole "Communion of Saints" present, whether more immediately or remotely interested in the baptised. It is the uniform spirit of her service "honour God, honour his grace, depend on his word, trust his promise, a promise how sweetly carried into effect by our Incarnate God in the days of his flesh : you have the strongest grounds of faith ; give him all your confidence, trust your Child wholly to his grace ; believe, believe ; accept the sign ; take the seal ; bear away the pledge ; and doubtless yours shall be the blessing."

And what is this but the very soul and spirit of the Gospel ? all its blessings are of grace, rich expressions of sovereign kindness and covenant love ; and they become our own, exactly as we accept them and apply them by faith, to our own individual circumstances and case. An unappropriated blessing is no blessing ; a boon unaccepted is no boon ; but as we honour grace by accepting it, so does it really

become a blessing : for it is the unfailing word of Scripture, “ If thou canst believe ”¹—“ according to your faith be it unto you.”²

And it is thus, I apprehend, that every believing Parent should receive his child from God : not as “ born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God : ”³ not merely as a child of nature, but a child of promise ; not as a child of providence only, but as a child of grace. It is this “ godly consideration ” of the gift that so enhances its value, and makes “ the fruit of the womb a reward.”⁴ It is not, in the believer’s apprehension, a child of immortal destinies only, but it is enfeoffed with an immortal inheritance ; it is a child of glory. And when the Christian Parent receives his Child into his natural arms, and enfolds him in the warmest embraces of his affection as a man ; he receives him also into the still closer embrace, of his spiritual arms ; reposes him on the bosom of his faith ; and enfolds him in all the graces, the love, the joy, the peace, the hope, which warm his heart as a saint of God. And while he blesses God for this new gift in nature, he especially blesses God for this child of promise,—it is a tribute of gratitude due from a gracious heart to “ the praise of the glory of his grace.”

¹ Mark ix. 23.

² John i. 13,

³ Mat. ix. 29.

⁴ Psa. cxxvii. 3,

And what is it but “the glory of his grace” that God proposes in reforming this sinful world, and renewing it in holiness? If the *pardon* of sin shall bring glory to grace, the *conquest* of sin, and the renewal of the world in holiness, shall bring glory to grace also. Most assuredly God never intended the Law as the means of converting the world; this honour was always reserved for his Gospel. The triumph over our rebellion was never designed for the precept, but for the promise. It was never intended that man should hear the precept, and obey it from his own moral power and strength; for this would be to assign the renewal of the world to man’s power, and would give the glory to man; but it was intended to give life to the Law in the human soul by the power of the Spirit; that “the praise” might be ascribed “to the glory of grace.” “For the promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.”¹ The Law never did make any thing perfect, nor was it ever designed to make it so; but the restoration of the perfection of the Law is due to the power of the Gospel: it is grace that restores the Law to its honours by imparting to the human soul the love of the Law, the sense of its holiness, and the desire to attain it: for it is the express

¹ Rom. iv. 13.

provision of the Gospel Covenant, "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts."¹ The obedience of the renewed man is to be "the obedience of faith,"² and not the obedience of his own natural power to a legal rule. For this purpose Christ came into the world; and for this purpose salvation is by promise; that faith, acting upon the promise, might renew the world in holiness, and grace have all the glory of the spiritual restoration of mankind.

It is scarcely necessary to remark how harmoniously the above interpretation of our Baptismal Service suits this design. It is faith acting on the promise. The obedience of the Child is the obedience of faith; and as he grows in grace, faith admires the gradual developement of the promise, and ascribes the imparted holiness of the Law, which it traces with pleasure in the nascent virtues of the Child, simply to that operation of the Spirit which secures the praise of the glory of free grace.

THE NEXT ADVANTAGE, on which we may remark, suggests itself immediately from the foregoing: That—**AS WE HONOUR THE GRACE OF GOD, BY EXPECTING BAPTISMAL BLESSINGS FROM FAITH IN THE PROMISE, SO WE RECTIFY THE GRAND PREVAILING MISTAKE WHICH LEGISLATORS, AND MORALISTS, AND STATESMEN, AND**

¹ Heb. viii. 10.

² Rom. xvi. 26.

CHRISTIAN DIVINES ALSO, AND GENERALLY THE WISE AND PRUDENT MEN OF THIS WORLD, HAVE LONG COMMITTED, AND ARE COMMITTING AT THIS HOUR, TO IMPROVE OUR SPECIES, AND TO AMELIORATE MANKIND.

We must have recourse to the foregoing **ADVANTAGE** for the statement of our position. That it is the design of God to renew the human character, not by the Law but by the Gospel, not by the precept but by the promise, not by a legal rule but by the influence of his Spirit : or in other words, that his design is to honour his Law by means of his Gospel. Immanuel, and not mere man, “ shall magnify the law and make it honourable.”¹

And if this position be true, as assuredly it is the very pith of the Gospel, then what a mistake have the wise and prudent men of the world been committing, for thousands of years, in endeavouring to make men honest, and to change the human character by the enforcements of mere law !

And yet is not this the case ? Take a survey of human society even in this Christian land, and what is the principle of moral government from the nursery to the Legislature ?

The grand prevailing principle is—*the rule of the Law calling upon the natural powers of man for obedience to its precept.*

¹ Is. xlii. 21.

To begin with the nursery—what is the first lesson that children are taught? is it their own impotence or their own power? surely the latter. The Child is addressed simply in the precept; he must do this, and he must do that; but he finds that though often told not to give way to this bad temper, or to neglect that duty, that the bad temper is continually returning, and the duty repeatedly neglected. The precept is repeated as the offence is repeated, and the Child, thrown on his own resources alone, feels that sin is constantly gaining the dominion over him. He makes little or no advance in improvement, and the fretted Parent adds correction to the precept, referring the Child still to nothing beyond the strength of his own natural resources; till, too frequently, habitual fretfulness is engendered; reserve supersedes affection; and distance, and alienation follow, which it is perhaps the unavailing effort of the Parent's life to correct, and, alas! too frequently, his bitter portion to lament, to his last hour upon earth.

On the same principle of the precept, the whole life of the Child is conducted merely by a repetition of rules: he must do this, he must not do that: and when the one is neglected, or the other violated, he must undergo the penalty of disobedience, or a promise is exacted from him, made in his own strength, that he will not be guilty of the same again. In all this, what is there but an appeal to his own power made

by à law, the perfection of which is continually convicting him of weakness, while it frets and goads his fallen nature by requiring that, with unceasing importunity, which every day of his life, that fallen nature by its continued failures confesses that it cannot give.

With respect to God, all his duty is to be the effect of the precept. . The Child is taught to pray : he must say his prayers morning and evening : he is inattentive, and he is told that he must pay more attention, for he is in the presence of God. He is tired, and begins to yawn; he is told that he would not yawn at play, and perhaps severely chid for this weariness of nature.. Here is nothing but the rigour of the precept ; no Gospel to encourage him, no persuasion from the promise that he is a child of God, that the eye of a kind and affectionate Father is upon him, pitying his weakness, and inviting him to confess it : encouraging him to ask for the Spirit to correct his infirmities, for that his "heavenly Father" will assuredly "give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." ¹

So again as to his lesson : the precept demands it as a duty, and consequently all is weariness and toil. He is not taught to ask a blessing upon his endeavours, that his mind may be instructed, and his faculties cultivated for the glory of God, and that God would give him the

¹ Luke xi. 13.

necessary industry and attention. And when distraction and idleness too plainly evidence themselves in a neglected lesson, does not the rigour of the law appear in punishment simply, without any attempt at conviction of sin, or any inducement to repentance by a reference to God as the Father of mercies, against whom the offence has been committed? The severity of the precept exacts the duty, and the penalty follows the violation of it.

And what encouragement can the Child, thus legally educated, derive from Christian motives? where is the blessedness of his Baptismal privileges as “a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven?” What can he know of the aid of the Spirit in helping his “infirmities,”¹ when a harsh precept is continually exacting that from his weak nature, which it cannot give, and those spiritual motives and supports to which as a child of God he is entitled, are never once brought to bear with practical efficacy in the relief of those very infirmities for which they are specially provided, and which constitute the very essence of the Gospel as a remedy for human helplessness and imperfection?

And can we wonder, My Dear Friend, that the hope of families should be disappointed, when children are educated almost exclusively

¹ Rom. viii. 26.

by the harshness of the Law, rather than by the encouragement of the Gospel? While we neglect God's means and adopt our own, what are we doing, but counteracting God? What wonder then that the failure is so common?

When sent to school alas! the same or rather an aggravated rigour of the precept still pursues the hapless Child of Baptismal privileges neglected and forgotten. Either the rod of the Law is constantly terrifying him to the discharge of duty, or false motives of conduct are applied, which supersede all the blessed, and heavenly, and effectual motives of the Gospel. The fear of shame, the terror of degradation, the love of reputation, the dread of a rival, the thirst of reward, or the love of distinction, entirely blot out the desire of instruction, that he may become a capable agent of usefulness in promoting the welfare of man, and an honoured instrument in advancing the Redeemer's kingdom and the glory of God. The Law surrounds him on all sides, with the strictness of its letter, the severity of its exactions, and the unrelenting harshness of its penalties and inflictions: and his wearied and jaded nature, resenting the oppression, is confirmed in self-esteem and self-pretension, and arrogance, and vanity, and presumption; till all those sins become his habit, which he had vowed at his Baptism to renounce. Hence, unless it please God to extricate him in special mercy from the destructive

urrent of a sinful world, and to pluck him as a “brand out of the fire,”¹ he passes through life the assertor of a proud morality, a self-righteous exacter of the precept, a decided enemy to the lively grace of the Gospel; and lost in the same ignorance and error which have cursed the day of his forefathers, and threaten through his mis-principled education,² to be the curse of that of his posterity also.

¹ Zech. iii. 11.

² See a very interesting discussion, of the best mode of conducting education, between some of the principal Statesmen of their day, at Secretary Cecil’s table at Windsor, as given by Ascham in the opening of his “Schoolmaster.” His own opinion was, as the result of long experience; “Love is fitter than feare, gentenesse better than beating, to bring up a childe rightlie in learning.” Among many most pertinent remarks he adds, “This will I say, that even the wisest of your great beaters, do as oft punish nature, as they do correcte faultes. Yea, many times, the better nature is sore punished; for, if one, by quicknesse of witte, take his lesson readilie; an other, by hardnesse of witte, taketh it not so spedelijc, the first is alwaies commended, the other is commonlie punished; when a wise scholemaster, should rather discretlie consider the right disposition of both their natures, and not so much weigh what either of them is able to do now, as what either of them is likelie to do hereafter. For this I know, not onlie by reading of booke in my studie, but also by experiance of life abroade in the world, that those which be commonlie the wisest, the best learned, and best men also, when they be olde were never commonlie the quickest of witte, when they were yonge.”

These sentiments are so powerfully instanced in the example of Lady Jane Grey, and are so well expressed by her in her

And as men are educated in the rigour of the precept, so the whole cast of their conduct, in all the relations of life, exhibits the consistent impress of the same rigour. The Child in return for the legal treatment of his Parent exacts the same unsparing demand of duty from him ; instead of exercising the patience, the forbearance, the self-denial and kindness, the condescension to his infirmities, the meekness of wisdom, mild resignation, and unwearied prayer which are the very expression of a sense of Gospel privileges, and distinguish

conversation with Ascham, that they are well worthy of record. "One of the greatest benefites that ever God gave me, is, that he sent me so sharpe and severe parentes, and so jintle a scholemaster. For when I am in presence eyther of father or mother; whether I speake, kepe silence, sit, stand, or go, eate, drinke, be merie, or sad, be sowyng, playing, dancing, or doing anie thing else, I must do it, as it were, in such weight, measure, and number, even so perfitelie as God made the world, or else I am so sharplie taunted, so cruelie threatened, yea presentlie, sometimes, with pinches, nippes, and bobbes, and other waies, which I will not name for the honour I bear them, so without measure misordered, that I think myselfe in hell, till time come that I must go to Mr. Elmer; who teacheth me so jintlie, so pleasantlie, with such fair allurementes to learninge, that I thinke all the time nothing whiles I am with him. And when I am called from him, I fall on weeping, because whatsoever I do else, but learninge, is full of grief, trouble, feare, and whole misliking unto me. And thus my booke hath been so much my pleasure, and bringeth dayly to me more pleasure and more, that in respect of it, all other pleasures, in very deede, be but trifles and troubles unto me."

the intercourse of “the Communion of Saints.” The same legal harshness of undue expectation and excessive demand, marks the other domestic relations of Husband and Wife and Master and Servant ; it is not the suavity of a Gospel communion, but the severity of a required duty, which characterises the exercise of these relations. So, indeed, throughout the whole social intercourse between neighbour and neighbour, there is a constant resort to the strictness of a legal letter, an unmitigated demand of right, an unconceding assertion of an extreme claim, a quick perception of offence, and as quick an appeal to the precept of ruled law : all which but too evidently proves the harsh principle from which the whole complexion of our manners is taken, even in this professedly Christian land ; and that in laying aside the Gospel privileges proposed by our Church in Baptism, instead of exhibiting the graces of a “Communion of Saints” formed by the Spirit, we exhibit little more than a community of natural men, formed on a rigorous precept, that rigour being proportionably qualified as Gospel ordinances are observed, and the spirit of the Gospel prevails among us.

Let us now look into public life in Christian England ; all bears the too evident impress of the grand mistake, the endeavour to alter the character of men by the enforcement of the precept. What a harsh enforcement of law is observable

in our prisons ! a man has offended the law of his country, and he must undergo the penalty by being transferred from his family or occupation, to the restraint of a prison ; perhaps his body is fettered, or subjected to the infliction of hard labour, or deprived of its usual sustenance, and his society is among the dissolute and dishonest. And can it really be hoped, that all this variety of legal penalty can be attended with the happy effect of making the dishonest man honest, or the drunkard sober ? or is this effect to be wrought by the moral or religious instruction he may receive ? If so this instruction would not be occasional, but daily and frequent, and a large portion of the prisoner's time would be devoted to this purpose ; but this is not the case ; and it is but too evident that if any improvement of character is expected, it is expected from the operation of legal inflictions. And what is the result ? just what might be expected, discomfiture and failure. The person once imprisoned, so far from being reformed by the infliction of law, has too frequently lost his character, instead of having recovered it ; and either becomes an habitual prisoner for life ; or he departs from prison with no better principle than he entered it, and his life remains unimproved. This I believe to be the uniform voice of experience in Newgate, and its kindred establishments of the metropolis. Neither the precept of law, nor the penalties of law, are

found to reform the human character. I have been Chaplain to a prison for more than one quarter of a century, and can truly say, that the result of my experience on this head is, that any favourable change of character which I have witnessed in the subjects of my charge, during that season, has arisen, not from the enforcement of Law, but from the mild and winning suavity of the Gospel. Chains and prisons may restrain, but they never can reform. And the result of my experience exactly harmonises with that view of the Gospel which these pages imperfectly pourtray; that our jurisprudence never can succeed in improving our population, till our prisons of rigorous law, become as to their ultimate object penitentiaries of the conciliating Gospel.

Look next at the Legislature, from which the laws emanate in this Christian land. "And the Lord God *commanded* the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."¹ This is the form of human law, the common frame of our Acts of Parliament. It is the command of authority: terms are specified, exceptions, if any, are stated, obedience is required, and the penalty is subjoined. And so long as man

¹ Gen. ii. 16, 17.

remains the fallen and sinful being he is, so long must human laws propose their rule and subjoin their penalty. But the question is whether in a Christian community, the spirit of whose rule is "I will have mercy and not sacrifice ;" the above mode of preceptive and inflictive legislation, is that which is adapted to make or to preserve a people moral or religious? The obedience of the Gospel is not an obedience arising from the demand of any precept of God or man on the natural powers of the human heart, for such it cannot give ; but it is "the obedience of faith," an obedience wrought in the heart by the Spirit of that God who worketh in every believer "both to will and to do of his good pleasure :" ¹ and the obedience paid by this man to human laws, springs from a spiritual motive, his faith calling upon him to be "subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." ² Might we not expect then from a Christian Legislature a code of laws founded on Gospel motives, the suavity of which should temper the severity of the precept, and while it aimed to suppress evil in every shape, never imposed the penalty but as the resort of imperious necessity? Would not the leading character of legislative enactment be, to induce and to encourage to good, to establish means of grace throughout the land, to provide churches and

¹ Phil. ii. 13.

² 1 Peter ii. 13.

ministers according to the number and wants of the people, to institute schools, to arrange the most spiritual and the most useful mode of education ; and, generally, to call all those great and efficacious motives into action, from which emanates that highest order of human character, which is equally a blessing in public and private life—the just man formed on the principles of the Gospel ? What then is the real state of the case ? Though the Gospel is the law of the land, and the Bible and the Liturgy and the whole Ecclesiastical Establishment are part and parcel of our legislative provisions ; yet can the spirit of the Gospel be said to be the spirit of our laws ? Is it their great and obvious character, to restrain that they may improve, and to punish that they may bring to repentance ; to suspend the functions and privileges of the citizen for a season by the imprisonment of his person, that he may be restored to the due exercise of those functions, and the enjoyment of those privileges, and thus become a blessing to himself, his family, and his country, and an honour to his God ? Human life is cheap among us, there being, it is said, more than one hundred and fifty offences attended with the penalty of death. Human comfort is cheap among us, from the multiplicity of statutes which enjoin fine, imprisonment, personal punishment, the hulks, and transportation to a distant land ; and which admit no opportunity of repentance,

make no allowance for it, offer no encouragement to it, and yet expect to ameliorate the character solely by the infliction of the penalty, so that the offence shall not be repeated.¹ We stimulate the pruriency of human passions and appetites, by encouraging gaming, by the licensed sale of spirituous liquors; and we offer a snare to human cupidity by the multiplicity and frequency of oaths. But it is invidious as it is unnecessary for me to "basket up the family of plagues that waste our vitals," my object being to show that the *leading character* of our legislative acts is to preserve and improve

¹ Most willingly do I admit that the severity of the law is frequently tempered by the merciful prerogative of the Crown, and by the lenity of official discretion; but this does not affect the character of the law; that still remains the same. Nor does it appear to me to be possible to relieve our laws from the imputation of a merciless severity, so long as the present mode of capital punishment is uncommuted for the privation of personal liberty, and so many are annually hurried out of life into an irreversible eternity, who are the least qualified to meet the severity of judgment, and whose confinement in an asylum that was at once punitive and penitentiary, (the former in order to the latter) according to the character of its inmates, might have restored them to society as a blessing, or deprived them for life of the ability to repeat their crime.—A large proportion of those who suffer seem to be from 18 to 30 years of age; 40 or 50 years of prolonged life shut out from opportunities of crime, is a protracted day of grace, in which many a soul might, with God's blessing upon the means, be recovered from the error of his way, and be restored to the blessings both of this world and the next.

society not by the operation of Gospel principles, but by the precept and penalty of Law ; a fundamental mistake, inasmuch as we are expecting that from the precept which the precept can never obtain from our fallen nature; and which the renovating and empowering grace of the Gospel can alone produce. Law may and must restrain the hand from the commission of the outward act; it is the Gospel alone that can supply the motive to improve the act, and to direct it to good.

Look next to the Cabinet of the Statesman. And are not the principles of government equally mistaken as the principles of legislation ? In a Christian country professing the Bible, the Book of motives, as the storehouse of its principles of government; should we not conclude that this would be the principle of its rule ; that —**MAN IS AS HIS MOTIVES ARE**, or that **MOTIVES MAKE THE MAN** ? To the outward eye indeed, “manners maketh man ;” but to the eye of wisdom tracing up effects to causes, “motives make the man ;” inasmuch as corrupt fruit uniformly proceeds from a corrupt tree : and “make the tree good,”¹ and you make the fruit good also.

Might we not hope, then, that such a Government would direct its policy simply by the pole-star of principle ; and so far from violating it by

¹ Matt. xii. 33.

any territorial acquisition which was not approved by justice—by any commercial advantage un-sanctioned by the same—by any appeal to the cupidity of the people, or to the pruriency of their appetites to raise money for purposes of state, that on the contrary it would deem the inviolability of principle so sacred, that no civil necessity could justify the infringement of it? And might we not further hope that this principle would be the very spirit of its rule? That in all political necessities it would not resort to a mere expedient, as a temporary corrective of evil; but that it would wisely and patiently consider the cause of the evil, and seek effectually to amend it in its principle. Let us take the case of Ireland for an example. Many of the people have long expressed themselves dissatisfied with their Government; and this expression has arisen, from century to century, to its most distressing degree in civil commotion. Concessions have been made from time to time, and armies have been sent and renewed; and the evil is now of so menacing a character, as to induce the solemn consideration, whether concession shall not be carried to its utmost, and all that is demanded be yielded; while to many it appears, that this concession may prove the admission of principles into the State, which may reduce us again to ignorance and slavery. In such a juncture might not a Christian Cabinet be expected to reason thus? “Centuries

have elapsed, and one generation has been borne away after another, but the men are the same : if we make concession it does but provoke demand ; if on refusing demand civil commotion ensue, which is quieted by force, the same force must again and again be called into action, when the terror of its former exercise has subsided ? It is evident, therefore, that as the men are the same, their principles are the same, and we must correct their principles to correct the men. Force will not avail, let us try what kindness may do : the Law has not effected our purpose, with its precept and its penalty, let us try what the Gospel may effect.” And if the first question, with such a Cabinet, in the case of insurrection or rebellion, was that of *expediency*, “what is to be done at this moment to relieve the pressure of incumbent difficulty ?” the second would be a question of *principle* : “does not our security rest on principle alone ?” To expect security from ignorance and error is perfectly childish ; it is to expect them to belie their nature, and to force the stream back to the fountain. The only security that we can find, under God, is in the truth of our own principles. It is not the precept “to obey,” again and again enjoined, and its observance enforced with the penalty of the bayonet, that can avail us, but Christian ministers, and Christian teachers, to impart those principles of truth, from which an intelligent obedience can alone

arise. It is the Gospel of peace that can alone impart the principles of peace. Let the only blood shed in Ireland be that of faithful and laborious Protestant ministers, whose kindness and patience provoke the intolerance of ignorance and error ; and that blood would be the seed of a moral renovation, and therefore of a civil tranquillity among her people, which no concession, however unqualified, no precept or penalty of legal rule, however extreme, can ever produce. In a word, it is the Gospel alone which supplies the principles of truth, and as men receive that truth, so must moral and civil obedience prevail.

But so long as the precept and penalty of mere law are resorted to, to obtain a willing obedience to that law, it is evident that discomfiture must be the result ; both God and experience are against it : for it is attempting that change of character by the Law, which God has ordained shall only be effected by the Gospel.

A portion of the same great practical mistake, is that idolatrous admiration of talent, which ascribes to human wisdom and human prudence that effect, which the principles of Gospel truth under the influence of the Spirit can alone produce. It is no human prudence that can convert Hindoos or Mohammedans to Christianity, or make the advocates of Roman Infallibility the willing subjects of a Protestant Government. All the prudence and all the talent on earth,

combined in one council cannot effect this : whereas if a Sunday School child, fresh from the simple instruction of Christian truth, and taught that the knowledge of a Saviour was the one grand remedy appointed by God for the correction of human error, were permitted with the reins of government in his hands, to apply this simple principle, till passing through the obstructions of prejudice and ignorance, the opposition of office, and the delays of so novel a practice, it issued in the appointment of holy ministers and teachers in the churches and schools, and holy functionaries in office ; he would do more to extricate us from our present difficulty, than all the human wisdom, and human prudence that have been applied to the relief of unhappy Ireland, from the times of Walsingham and Burleigh to the present hour. The world stands not so much in need of talent as of honesty ; it needs not policy but principle, or rather the conviction that principle is the best policy. It is not mere official ability and worldly wisdom, to which God has awarded the honour of producing the most accomplished state of society ; it is to the power of his principle of truth, and to the might of his Spirit operating on that principle, to which the renovation of the world is due. And all the talent of man, with all its policy and all its power, all its legal rule and legal penalty, backed by its loudest tone of precept and warning, " Do, do,

do, or be punished," shall sink into utter nothingness, before the one plain word " Believe," the appointed renovator of human society, which shall eventually transform every community of mere men into a communion of faithful followers of Christ Jesus.

And this is the only mode by which all political commotions can be effectually appeased, which arise from the discordant sentiments of mankind : error must be superseded by truth.

Confidence in human wisdom and human power has been the devil's grand delusion; by which he has fostered the pride of man, and deceived the nations from the beginning. For six thousand years nearly, he has flattered the pride and independence of man, persuading him that the counsels of human Cabinets, and the laws to enforce those counsels, can rule the moral world. How they have been able to do it, let accumulated penalties, and increasing legislative severity, and harsher legal inflictions, and war and carnage and misery declare. If another state of things is at hand, it is evident, both from Scripture and experience, that human Legislatures and Cabinets must alter the principle of their rule; that Law must yield to principle, the precept to the promise, human power to the power of the Spirit; and that the *first* qualification for office, must not be TALENT but HOLINESS.

The sum of human wisdom is right principle ;

and the sum of human prudence is the due application of that principle to the production of its proposed end.

But we must yet ascend another step in this interesting subject, and rise from the Cabinet to the Pulpit: and here it is but too evident that if the accredited moral instructors of mankind, throughout Christendom, have taught for doctrines these commandments of men, instead of the grace, and spiritual power of the Gospel, and have been seeking to make men moral by preaching the requisitions of the Law rather than the influence of the Gospel, the taught can only present the character of the morality impressed on them by their teachers. As the Pulpit is, such will be the Cabinet, the Legislature, the Prison, the Parlour, and the Nursery. The complexion of its doctrines will give the complexion to every rank, condition, and relation of social life. And has not the prevailing divinity of the Pulpit throughout Christendom for eighteen hundred years nearly, been the prevailing divinity of the natural heart of man, under the sanction of a Christian name? Has it not with the name of Christ on the lips of the preacher, been an attempt to bring men to the obedience of Law by enforcing the precept of Law? Has it not been the call of the preacher on the natural heart, to render obedience to the precept, when the Christian motives and principles which could alone enable to that obe-

dience, have been so wholly thrown into shade, as to be virtually suppressed? And has the drunkard been urged to sobriety, and the dishonest to "steal no more" from human motives merely, as the apprehension of consequences, the fear of shame, the loss of reputation and the like! Then what is this but the divinity of mere nature, the divinity of Plato and Epictetus and Seneca; not the divinity of CHRIST CRUCIFIED, that "wisdom of God," which "destroys the wisdom of the wise," and "that power of God," which "brings to nothing the understanding of the prudent?"¹ And has not this attempt been made rather in human strength than in the power of the Spirit? Has not a confidence been reposed in "wisdom of words," in "excellency of speech and of knowledge," in human eloquence, in the suasion² of reason, in powerful statement, in fine displays of imagination, in affectionate earnestness, in a word, in some modification of human ability, rather than in the aid of the Spirit, and "the foolishness" of that "preaching" of the cross of Christ, with all its loveliness and all its encouragements, which "saves them that believe?"

A very brief view of the Church from the ascension of its Head into glory to the present

¹ 1 Cor. i. 19.

² Πειθος, translated "enticing," the margin reads "persuasive." 1 Cor. ii. 4.

hour, will give a fearful representation of the preaching of grace contracted and suppressed, and the preaching of Law dominant and general. In the first century, called the Apostolic age, what resistance did our Lord meet with in his own ministry from the legal principles of Pharisees and formalists ! . And it seems to have required all the power of Apostolic authority, and wisdom, and grace in Paul especially, as well as in the other inspired messengers of the pure Gospel, to maintain the integrity of grace against the legal Judaizing spirit of their day. It was the invasion of this natural temper of the human heart, that gave birth to the first Council held at Jerusalem, and to the full and powerful condemnation of this mischief, in more than one epistle addressed to some of the most flourishing of the Churches. When these original lights were removed from this lower scene of their active exertions, how quickly did this legal spirit operate to obscure the lustre of grace ! The next age was distinguished by the Gnostic depravation of the person of Christ, and with this, as all grace was obscured, so legal motives and legal means of salvation soon assumed the dominion. The reign of Novatian harshness succeeded in the third century ; the intolerance of legal severity having superseded the conciliating benignity of grace ; and the three following centuries take their name, from the several modes of yet further depraving the

person of the Saviour, by the successive prevalence of the Arian, Nestorian, and Eutychian heresies, till the preaching of the Law gained a complete supremacy throughout the Church in the opening of the seventh century, when the man of sin received his full establishment in the Episcopal chair of Rome. During the nine following centuries, superstition upheld the reign of legal precept, by her self-imposed penances and mortifications, her monasticism and vows, and the legal ability of one soul, not only to save itself, but to contribute by its supererogatory abundance of merit to the salvation of its neighbour also. Till the sixteenth century arose, we hear of no “*Sæculum Evangelicum*,” no reign of grace, and then arose the “*Sæculum Reformatum*;”¹ that age of Reformation when Christ crucified being again “lifted up”² drew the eyes of an awakened world to him; and that one simple principle of pure grace, “being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,”³ being again disclosed under the operation of the Spirit, legal perfection in sinful man in all its ten thousand forms fled before it, and free grace for a season made no ineffectual struggle for the spiritual dominion of this Western World.

¹ I use the enumeration of Christian centuries as given by Cave in his “*Historia Literaria*.”

² John xii. 32.

³ Rom. v. 1.

And yet the extent to which these principles of Reformation actually prevailed in the Pulpit of our own Church, confessedly the most flourishing Church of the Reformation, seems to have been overrated, if we may receive the following evidence of Bishop Jewell in the 14th Homily, written after the accession of Elizabeth to the throne ; “ But sincere Preachers were, and ever shall be, but a few in respect to the multitude to be taught. For our Saviour Christ saith, “ The harvest is plentiful, but the workmen be but few : ” which hath been hitherto continually true, and will be to the world’s end : and in our time, and here in our country so true, that every shire should scarcely have one good Preacher, if they were divided.” And speaking of “ Peril of Idolatry,” he says, “ but a true Preacher to stay this mischief, is in very many places scarcely heard once in a whole year, and somewhere not once in seven years, as is evident to be proved.” That “ good Preachers ” afterwards increased is evident, though it is as evident that they soon began to decline. Elizabeth seems to have lived just long enough for her fame and her peace. Towards the conclusion of her reign, doctrines, before introduced, began to invade the simplicity of those of the Reformation, and which by gathering strength in the days of her successors, issued in a conflict, which by abusing grace on one hand, and depraving it on the other, terminated in that return

of the legal precept to our pulpits, which with the Restoration of Charles the Second to the throne has distinguished the divinity of our Church from his time to that of the Reformation of this present day.

And in this our day, partially reformed, and daily reforming as our English Pulpit is, yet can this day be justly said to be distinguished for attempting the amelioration of mankind by a full, simple, and persevering exhibition of the Gospel of free grace? I have but few opportunities of hearing, but if I may judge from the general character of the printed sermons I have seen, and from the accredited periodical productions conducted by members of our Church, the doctrines of grace are in most instances made to yield to the precept of Law, are so wholly kept out of sight, so partially exhibited, or so fenced and guarded by an excessive caution, that being prohibited the fair exercise of their powers, self-righteousness and self-ability smile at the feeble impression made on their all-dominant sway.

Look then at the state of divinity in the world, as it has been, and yet is. For fourteen centuries, from the first to the sixteenth, the character of the Christian Pulpit seems to have been that of moral reformation by preaching the precept of Law: during one century, to give it, as it seems to me the largest allowance, the simple Gospel of grace prevailed over one-fourth of the Christian world, if so large a proportion

of it ever ranged itself under the Protestant standard : from that time, to the beginning of this our present improved state, renovation by the Law was the prevailing doctrine of our pulpits ; and may we accept the above-stated particulars as just evidences of the prevailing sentiments of this our day, the moral renovation of man by preaching the precept, is the characteristic feature of even our Reformed Pulpit.

How then, My Dear Friend, could it ever be justly expected, that human society should have assumed a more improved condition than it presents to us at this hour ? Over four-fifths of the world heathen and Mohammedan darkness has never yet felt the cheering light of the Gospel of grace ; and over the remaining fifth, known by a Christian profession, at least three parts seem to be sunk in the legal delusion of Greek and Roman superstition ; and even throughout the Protestant Churches, in the most favourable judgment of charity, can the pure principles of grace, the appointed renovators of fallen man to the image of his God, be said to be the prominent, much less the exclusive means adopted for human improvement. See then the reason that in this nineteenth century of the Christian æra and in the fifty-ninth century of a world, shall we say now hastening to its perfection with quicker pace than heretofore, man has made such feeble advances in regaining the moral image of his God. We have been attempt-

ing to effect that by the precept of Law, which God has appointed to be done by the grace of his Gospel. Such appears to me to be the fact; and the conclusion of the Prophet seems to describe our condition with a graphic accuracy. If we had stood in the counsel of God, God would have honoured his own counsel, and the blessed effect had been produced; but as we have deserted his counsel for our own, defeat and discomfiture have been the necessary result. "But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings."¹ Had the grace of God been preached, the grace of God had surely produced its peculiarly blessed effects.

God never gave the precept of his Law for the purpose of making man holy or of keeping him so. The first expression of his will to Adam when the whole Law was comprehended in one precept, neither made him holy, nor was it given for that purpose. It was given as the *condition* of his continuance in Paradise, not as the *means* of imparting the obedience by which that continuance should be secured. And when it pleased God, in the giving of the Sinai covenant, to expand the expression of his will into ten precepts, so far was it done from the intention of enabling man to hope for heaven from his obedience to those ten precepts, that it was

¹ Jer. xxiii. 22.

given for the directly contrary purpose, to reduce him to utter hopelessness of justifying himself by the Law. For “the Law entered”—not that sin might be diminished—but “that the offence might abound,”¹ it multiplied transgression by multiplying the precept; for every additional Law given to man, shorn of his spiritual ability by sin, did but render his hope from the Law more desperate as it increased his guilt. Hence it is through the Law that “sin abounds,” “the strength of sin is the law :”² it is the Law that gives sin the dominion over us. As the Apostle plainly intimates when he ascribes our freedom from sin to grace: “For sin shall not have the dominion over you, for ye are not under the law but under grace.”³ The Law never yet freed a soul from the yoke of sin; this is the exclusive privilege of grace. And, if possible, he is yet more explicit on the inability of the Law to sanctify: “the Law was not made for a righteous man,” it was not made either to make a man righteous or to keep him so; yet the Law has its use and that a most important one; it is made to curb the unrighteous; the restraint of unrighteousness and not the imparting of righteousness is its purpose: it “is made for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly, and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers

¹ Rom. v. 20.

² 1 Cor. xv. 56.

³ Rom. vi. 14.

and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,"¹ &c. Human society could not exist without the restraints of law; and it is to restrain from evil that laws are enacted, not to enable to good. The object of Law both human and divine is the same; to enjoin the rule of duty, and to impose the penalty of disobedience; but no law gives ability to the subject of it to perform its provisions.²

This ability to perform the precept of the Law, is the peculiar gift as it is the peculiar glory of the Gospel of Christ Jesus. He came to fulfil all righteousness; and while not one jot or tittle departed from the Law till all was fulfilled, our violations of the Law being atoned for by his blood, its perfect requisitions being accomplished by his obedience, and its righteousness again imparted to man by his Spirit, he is eminently "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that BELIEVETH."³ What

¹ 1 Tim. i. ix.

² "Men fearing God are thereby a great deal more effectually, than by positive laws, restrained from doing evil; inasmuch as those laws have no farther power than over our outward actions only, whereas unto mens' inward cogitations, unto the privy intents and motions of their hearts, religion serveth for a bridle."—Hooker, Ec. Pol. v. 2.

Chains may confine the hand, and prisons may immure the body; but "inward cogitations," "privy intents, and motions of the heart," which constitute the real man,—the man within, can be swayed by principle alone. The Gospel is the storehouse of principle.

³ Rom. x. 4.

the Law was unable to effect on account of our imperfection, God in mercy did effect through the all-sufficiency of his Incarnate Son : “ For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh ; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.”¹ Our obedience to the Law therefore is not the result of an imposed precept, authoritatively enforced on our incapable nature ; but it is the result of the operation of God’s Spirit on our sinful hearts. It is the promise of the New Covenant, and not the precept of mere Law ; “ I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.”² They shall no more be written as inoperative powerless precepts upon tables of stone ; they shall not be written as they are in our churches on tablets of wood, or as they are in our Bibles on pages of paper, and thus be presented to the outward eye ; but these laws shall be put into our minds by the Spirit, that we shall have a spiritual understanding of them ; and written in our hearts by the same Spirit so that we shall approve, admire, and love them : in a word we shall have an “ understanding heart,” which is the brief scriptural compendium of spiritual communication and of Christian attainment.

¹ Rom. viii. 3, 4.

² Heb. viii. 10.

The Sinai Covenant never annexed any power of obedience to the Law which it enjoined : this is the exclusive privilege and peculiar glory of the Gospel.

It is to the grace of the Gospel and not to the precept of the Law that the Apostles ascribe their *sanctification*. “ For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another ; ”¹ what caused the change in them then from sin to holiness ? not the precept of the Law, “ but after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, ” &c. See also Rom. v. 6—11, and Ephes. ii. 1—6.

So *holiness* is not ascribed to the conviction or power of the precept, but to the operation of the Spirit on the renewed heart. “ We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”² “ But as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”³ Our *obedience* also is the result of faith

¹ Titus iii. 3—5.

² Eph. ii. 10.

³ John i. 12, 13.

and the Holy Spirit, not of reason subjecting the man to the requisitions of a legal precept : it is “ the obedience of faith ”—seeing ye have purified your souls in *obeying* the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren.”¹ —“ Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto *obedience.*”²

Neither under the Gospel are men called upon to obey the Law, or to be holy but upon Gospel motives. After a full display of the blessed mercies of the Gospel in the eleven first chapters of his epistle to the Romans, the Apostle uses them all as Gospel motives of obedience ; “ I beseech you therefore by the mercies of God,” not by the precept of the Law, “ that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God which is your reasonable service.” And this willing sacrifice of the whole man to God is never under the Gospel expected from the requisition of the Law, but from the love and mercy of the Gospel. “ For the love of Christ constraineth us ; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead ; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again.”³ Believers are “ bought with a price,” and love, and gratitude, and joy, are the

¹ 1 Peter i. 22.

² Ibid, i. 2.

³ 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

powerful motives which constrain them to glorify God in their “body and their spirit which are his.”¹ See also Colossians iii. 12, and the following verses.

Nor is it ever intimated that the insisting on obedience to the legal precept, by the bare statement of that precept, can ever cause the spiritual Paradise to flourish again upon the earth: this great moral change is uniformly ascribed in Scripture to the promise of the New Covenant—the gift of the Spirit; for it is only when “the Spirit” shall “be poured upon us from on high” that “the wilderness” shall “be a fruitful field.”²

And does not our Church confirm this view of our legal inability and the Gospel sufficiency in her Communion Service? The rubrick which precedes the declaration of the Law is full to our purpose. “Then shall the Priest, turning to the people, rehearse distinctly all the TEN COMMANDMENTS; and the People, still kneeling, shall after every commandment ask God mercy for their transgression thereof in the time past, and grace to keep the same for the time to come, as followeth.” Here it is intimated that grace alone can enable us to keep the Law for the time to come; and grace is the sole produce of the gospel: for the Law knows no grace; nothing but an unyield-

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 20.

² Isa. xxxii. 15.

ing demand of obedience. Accordingly we renounce all capacity of natural obedience to the Law ; we deplore our incapacity, and acknowledge that we are subjects of mercy alone, when after each commandment we implore, " Lord have mercy upon us," for we cannot keep this law ; and we fly for refuge to the Gospel, when we pray, " and incline our hearts to keep this law," " thou alone canst incline our hearts by thy Spirit, give us O Lord a willing obedience, and dispose our affections to love and keep this Law : " and we conclude our petitions by pleading the very words of the New Covenant, as the only source of spiritual obedience ; " and write all these thy laws in our hearts we beseech thee." " Remember thy promise O Lord in thy New Covenant of mercy, and give us that thing which by nature we cannot have, a hearty desire to do thy will, and to obey thy commandments."

Shall then the old objection be again thrown in our teeth—you make void the law through faith ? If so we must with the Apostle reject the accusation with abhorrence, and say, " God forbid :" nay, so far are we from making it void, that we render it its largest effect, we give it its firmest establishment, we ascribe to it its highest honours.

The Law is a copy of the divine image, a transcript of the perfections of God. It is holiness in the precept ; the divine nature in the

rule. It is spirituality in detail : it is expanded justice, holiness, goodness, wisdom, and truth : it is the moral arrangement projected by the love of God for the temporal and eternal happiness of man : it is man's perfection, because the All-wise God has placed in it the perfection of his own will. The Law must therefore be the order of human happiness, because it is the rule of human goodness, according to the will of God : it is the path of rectitude, and must consequently be the path of man's choicest blessedness. The smallest obliquity from it, must be misery, as it is sin ; the constant walk in it, must be happiness, as it is obedience. The slightest deviation from it, suggested by apparent advantage, is the short-sightedness of sin opposing itself to the ruled will of God ; all adherence to its spiritual rule, though tried to the utmost under the discouragements of fear, or the imposing solicitations of a greater expediency, is the consistency of holiness trusting God with the unfailing rectitude of his own precept, and the infallible perfection of his own will. Let man but attain to the perfection of the rule, and he attains the highest moral perfection of which his nature is capable ; for the rule is the expression of the divine will towards him ; and in the performance of the will of the Creator is necessarily placed the greatest well-being of the creature. It is therefore the sum of our sanctification as it is the sum of God's will towards

us, and consequently must be the sum of our happiness. To this moral Law then, which is prescribed by God as the perfection of our nature, belongs in its place and degree the fine encomium pronounced on Law in the abstract. " Of Law there can be no less acknowledged, than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world : all things in heaven and earth do her homage ; the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power : both angels, and men, and creatures of what condition soever, though each in different sort and manner, yet all with uniform consent, admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy."¹ Apply this to that Law of which man is the subject, and so exquisite is its blessedness, so extensive is its rule.

And shall we make void this Law ? God indeed forbid ; no, we would exert every power to establish it in every heart, and to induce man to secure his own greatest happiness in unsinning obedience to its sway. But the Law cannot make man obedient to its own rule, any more than a casket of jewels can give strength to the hand of an infant to bear itself away. The Gospel then must do for the Law what the Law cannot do for itself. " If there had been a law given which could have given life ; verily righteousness should have been by the law ;" but

¹ Hooker, Ec. Pol. end of Book I.

no such law could be given to fallen man, without lowering the divine perfections to the level of man's imperfections. Instead therefore of abating one iota from the glory of his own attributes, by lowering the standard of his Law to accommodate the incapacity of man ; the Eternal Wisdom sent the Second Person in the Tri-une Jehovah, to assume our incapable nature ; that by imparting to that nature the virtue of his own Godhead, he might make man the very "righteousness of God in him ;"¹ might by his blood atone for those violations of the Law of which man had been guilty, by his obedience perfect all righteousness in the human subject, and by his Spirit impart the very image of the divine nature, of which the Law is a copy, to the human soul. See then the honour of the Law vindicated by God-man, the perfection of the Law accomplished by God-man, and the end of the Law, as the perfection of our nature, established by God-man, in restoring the spirituality of the Law as the sanctification of man to his recovered soul. Here then, I re-state it, is the grand mistake upon which all human rule has proceeded up to this hour ; that men are attempting to do that by the precept of Law, which the Law never was given to effect, and which it never can effect in its incapable subject, man ; but which the rich

Gospel of grace, with its promise, and its power, and its encouragements, and its atoning blood, and its quickening Spirit, and its Paternal love is provided, expressly provided to do for it. The rudeness of the blast does not draw the traveller to the wind, but drives him from it ; and the ruder the blast the greater the distance. The Law with its perfect precept, and its rigorous penalty, can only drive man to a distance from God ; and the more acutely the perfection of that precept is apprehended, and the more unreservedly the justice of that penalty is admitted, the more awfully that distance is felt, till hope is utterly lost in despair. It is the sun of grace, with all its warmth, and light, and benignity, and love, which encourages the traveller to look up at a countenance beaming with the sweetest kindness, and to approach a presence where mercy is seated at the right hand of glory ; where obedience is the richest privilege, and holiness is consummate happiness.¹

¹ The distinct uses of the Law and the Gospel are clearly stated by Bradford. "God's law requireth nothing of us, but that which was in our nature before the fall, which we see is impossible for us to pay accordingly ; and yet God, not unjust in that he asketh of us nothing thereby, but the self-same thing which he gave us in our creation. The law then, and the precepts of God were given after the fall of man, not that man should thereby get life and the thing which was lost by sin, (for the blessed Seed was promised for the recovering hereof and to him that pertained,) but that man by it might know sin, and what he had lost, thereby to desire more deeply the pro-

Will it be said, My Dear Friend, that I have assigned a disproportionate degree of attention to this subject. If so, I can only say that as the very pith and soul of our question,—salvation by the promise and not by the precept—it seemed to me to deserve the space assigned in this letter. A volume is required to do it justice; for it appears to me, that the renovation of the world after the image of its God, depends on the right understanding of this statement, and the consequent enforcement of it in practice. It is no less a question than this,—whether the principle of moral amelioration on which men have hitherto acted, is not utterly false—whether they have not been counteracting the great

mised Seed, by whom as we be received, so our evils be not imputed, and that we being renewed by his holy Spirit and new seed, should as new-born babes desire, and by will begin to do the law of God, which after our deliverance forth of this corrupt body, and man of sin, by death, we shall without all let fully accomplish, and at the length receive the body to be spiritual (as Paul saith) and holy, ready to obey and serve the Spirit, as a helper, rather than a hinderer. Oh ! happy day, when wilt thou appear ! ”

—“ I would have the end wherefore God gave his law to be considered, namely, not for man to get thereby eternal life, which appertained to the promised seed; but to shew man what sin is, and what by sin he lost, that he might by his inability be driven to desire of very necessity the promised Messias, and so by him to receive the Spirit; where through being regenerate, he might learn to love the law, to take it as a directory and rule to live by, and to hedge in his old man from controlling.”—Fathers, &c. vi. pp. 389, 390.

principle of holiness revealed by God for this purpose, and whether the present state not of the heathen world merely, but of the Church—not of the two great populous branches of that Church now sunk in Greek and Latin corruption, but of the Reformed Church, and of that portion of it confessedly the best reformed, does not too plainly and too lamentably exhibit the inefficacy of the principle hitherto employed to effect the improvement of mankind ? Six thousand years are nearly past, and how fearfully distant from God is both the uncivilized and civilized world, the Unchristian and the Christian, the Unreformed and Reformed ! And what is the reason ? Is it that God has revealed no adequate remedy for the evil ? certainly not. Nearly eighteen hundred years have enjoyed a perfect Gospel, a Gospel charged with the fullest supplies of renewing grace. Is it then that man has not only neglected to apply the remedy, but that he has counteracted the appointment of God ? certainly both history, and the ordinary practice of Christendom at this hour declare this to be the case ; for where is the community, where is the Church, I would even ask, where are the families in which the precept of Law has not been enforced as the dominant principle of moral amelioration, and not the promise of grace quickened into renovating virtue by the Spirit of the living God ?

And have not the artifices of the arch-enemy

of human improvement borne ample testimony to the truth of the above remarks? Is it not against the doctrine of free grace that he has directed his most determined opposition whether it be by force or fraud? He has arrayed both the moral, and intellectual, and the very spiritual world also against them as demoralising, as absurd, and as even subversive of spirituality itself. The moral man proud of his own virtues, asserts that as grace abounds sin must abound: the intellectual man sees nothing but folly in that "foolishness of preaching," which sinks the intellectual superiority of the wise, and the designing policy of the prudent into dust, and exalts the docility and simplicity of the child: and the spiritual man untrue to his own principles, and unjust to the grace which has led him so far on his way to heaven, listens to the suggestions of unsubdued pride, and mixes up his own strength with the freeness and fulness of grace; and perhaps raises the loudest outcry against the full declaration of the Gospel. Hence it is that God's loving mercy and truth have been withheld from the great Congregation; and the cry of antinomianism has been most perseveringly repeated, where those very doctrines which are alone given to effectuate the Law in the improvement of mankind, have been most successfully preached. I conceive this to be the master-piece of Satan in opposing the doctrines

of grace : he assumes the port of an Angel of light ; he mingles among the ranks of the army of truth itself, and has address enough to turn their own weapons against the very cause they would support. When shall the blessed hour arrive, when every minister shall be entitled to take up the words of the Psalmist and to say, “ I have preached righteousness in the great congregation : lo, I have not restrained my lips O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart, I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation : I have not concealed thy loving kindness and thy truth from the great congregation.”¹ This is that “ foolishness of preaching,” BELIEVE AND LIVE, against which the devil has ever yet successfully opposed human wisdom, human prudence, and human power ; and under the pretence of honouring the very Law he hates, he has rendered God’s appointed mode of establishing the Law in the human heart, contemptible and effete. It has hitherto been driven into holes and corners, the rich possession of a few, safe in their meanness, and secure in the contempt of their cotemporaries ; or when it has appeared in pulpits of more public note in all its genuine beauty and loveliness, the men who have preached it, have been “ men wondered at,” considered as exceptions and

¹ Psalm xl. 9, 10.

peculiars, not as examples to be followed, but rather as beacons to be avoided.

We have now entered the first half of the nineteenth century of Christianity ; and if the question be asked why has not the Gospel been more successful in turning man to God ? the only just answer that can be given, appears to me to be, because the plain simple Gospel of Jesus Christ, the renovation of man by grace, has not been preached. If man had been true to God, God had certainly been true to man. The word of God is “ go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,”¹ and if the present *ungospelled* state of the world may be accounted for in part by the Gospel not having been received ; must not by far the largest part of the account be charged to the real fact, that the Gospel has not been preached ?

This is not the place to show what that Gospel is ; it will be admitted to a more seasonable consideration at the conclusion of the next letter.

And now, My Dear Friend, if it be a desirable object, to apply in all its vital energy, that principle of renovation, which the Father of Mercies has revealed for the spiritual improvement of mankind,—the promise in order to the

¹ Mark xvi. 15.

precept—how simply does the interpretation of Baptism and its kindred Services, stated throughout these letters, effect the same ! The believing Parent, on the birth of his Child, accepts it as a child of God, as it is interested in the promises made to the children of believers. The Child is the gift of God ; it is received from him, and it is devoted to him ; it is educated under a persuasion that “ he is faithful that ” hath “ promised,”¹ and in confidence that he is interested in the salvation of Christ, the Child is instructed to walk worthy of his holy calling, to believe that Christ has justified him by his blood, and is sanctifying him by his Spirit; and from these blessed considerations to draw constant encouragement to walk before him in holiness and righteousness all the days of his life. Thus as the parties believe the Gospel, even so do they attain the practical holiness of the Law.

ANOTHER ADVANTAGE is, that—A NEW ARGUMENT WOULD THUS BE AFFORDED TO MINISTERS AND PARENTS, AND SPONSORS, AND TO EVERY MEMBER OF THE CHURCH, TO INSIST ON THE BECOMING CONVERSATION OF EVERY CHURCH-MAN FROM THE BLESSEDNESS OF HIS BAPTISMAL PRIVILEGES, AND THE SOLEMN RESPONSIBILITY OF HIS BAPTISMAL VOWS.

¹ Hebrews x. 23.

It is but too evident that much confusion exists on this subject, under what character a minister of our Church is to address his people.

To address them as really *converted* without distinction, while they are evidencing their privileges by no corresponding practice, bringing forth no fruits meet for repentance, or expressive of real faith, would doubtless be “a dangerous downfall ;” would encourage a false security, confound nature with grace, and ascribe to the mere *opus operatum* what is only due to the *opus operantis*—to the mere external application of the Sacrament, what is due to the gracious effect actually wrought in the soul.¹

¹ If the following able statement of Hooker's be admitted as authority, the question, as to the mere reception of Baptism being actual regeneration, is for ever set at rest.—“Baptism is an action in part *Moral*, in part *Ecclesiastical*, and in part *Mystical*; *moral*, as being a duty which men perform towards God: *ecclesiastical*, in that it belongeth unto God's Church as a public duty; finally *mystical*, if we respect what God doth thereby intend to work.

“The greatest *moral* perfection of baptism consisteth in men's devout obedience to the law of God, which law requireth both the outward act or thing done, and also that religious affection which God doth so much regard, that without it whatsoever we do is hateful in his sight; who therefore is said to respect *adverbs* more than *verbs*, because the end of his law, in appointing what we shall do, is our own perfection; which perfection consisteth chiefly in the virtuous disposition of the mind, and approveth itself to him, not by *doing*, but by *doing well*. Wherein appeareth also the difference between human and divine laws, the one of which two are content with *opus*

Such a ministry must necessarily be dead and barren—mere profession without spirit : and while “the blind” thus continue to “lead the blind,” they are walking in the security of Popish self-complacency, and must “both fall” together “into the ditch.”¹

On the other hand, to address a baptised people as heathens, must be equally a mistake in the contrary extreme. It is admitted that there are baptised sensualists, baptised extortioners, and “baptised infidels ;” but even these are to be addressed not without hope. They have been baptised ; they have assumed the Christian name ; they still bear it : they would be offended if we deprived them of it ;

operatum, the other requires *opus operantis* ; the one do but claim the deed, the other especially the mind. So that according to laws which principally respect the heart of men, works of religion being not religiously performed, cannot morally be perfect.

“Baptism as an ecclesiastical work, is for the manner of performance ordered by divers ecclesiastical laws, providing that as the sacrament itself is a gift of no mean worth, so the ministry thereof might in all circumstances appear to be a function of no small regard.

“All that belongeth to the *mystical* perfection of baptism outwardly is the element, the word, and the serious application of both unto him which receiveth both ; whereunto if we add that secret reference which this action hath to life and remission of sins, by virtue of Christ’s own compact solemnly made with his Church, to accomplish fully the sacrament of baptism there is not any thing more required.” Ec. Pol. v. 62.

¹ Matt. xv. 14.

and we have a right, till they absolutely renounce it, to call upon them for consistency, to shew forth the excellency of Baptismal privileges, and the due performance of Baptismal vows. Both consistency and charity demand it of us ; for faith will never surrender hope, so long as the day of grace remains ; and even then, it is not for us to *pronounce* unfavourably of the departed, as it is not for us to restrain grace, but to give it the largest credit and confidence. Our Church exhorts every sick member without exception, "remember the profession which you made unto God in your Baptism," and she proceeds to examine him on the very particulars of his Baptismal vows. She knows no other examination : and if we were as ministers in the habit of addressing our people as a baptised people, responsible both for Baptismal privileges and vows, inviting them to a constant retrospect, and calling upon them for a holy consistency,—not only would the Pulpit harmonise with the Desk, but the people would be practically trained to the importance of their Baptism, and ministers would no longer be reduced to the difficulties, that I have known some good men to labour under in their ministry, of either addressing their people as heathens, or of dividing their audience into such nice distinctions, as seemed to deprive the Gospel of its peculiar loveliness and freedom, and utterly to destroy

the idea of the Church being a “Communion of Saints.”

But let the sentiment once prevail that the visible Church is a “Communion of” professing “Saints;” and the minister’s address is one continued call upon them for consistency of conversation. It should be often explicitly mentioned, and always implied, that the vows of God are upon them, and that the privileges of Baptism invite them to be holy that they may be happy. Christ their Saviour demands it of them, their Parents demand it, their Sponsors demand it, the Church demands it, their own temporal and eternal happiness demands it. They have taken upon themselves a public profession, let them acquit themselves of it: they profess to be Christians, “what manner of persons” then should they “be, in all holy conversation and godliness!”¹ they were baptised in the name of Christ, let them be pure as he was pure and “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called.”²

The Parent in the nursery, or in the domestic circle, has the advantage of the same argument. “Remember the profession which you made unto God in your Baptism.” If duties are performed with difficulty, as they always are from the depravity of our nature, the Parent may

¹ 2 Peter iii. §1.

² Eph. iv. 1.

thus address the child, “ Go to God and ask him for his Spirit to enable you: if the world or your own heart are too powerful for you, apply to God in your own weakness, and ask him for his strength ; and if you do not think that these great privileges belong to you, that as “ a member of Christ ” you perceive no benefit of that union, ask him for faith, and he will give it you ; and you shall find the blessedness of prayer, for he will shew you that he has adopted you as his child, by the freedom with which you shall say, “ Abba, Father ; ” and this holy communion begun with him here, shall be both an earnest and an evidence to you, that you are “ an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven,” and shall hereafter enjoy a richer communion with him in glory.”

The Sponsor has the advantage of the same argument in his occasional visits to his charge. Influenced by a steady purpose to acquit himself of his obligations, he may continually exercise his kindness, by questions, which take for granted the acknowledgment of Baptismal responsibility by the Child ; and in conversing with him respecting his tempers and duties, an easy resort may be had, and a powerful ally would be found in an appeal to the privileges and vows of his Baptism.

And were the Church sensible of its blessed privileges as a “ Communion of Saints,” every member of that Church, to which the Child

belonged, would take an interest in his spiritual growth ; and in kindness and affection, would call upon him, to shew forth in his life, a real profession of Baptismal privileges and vows. Let the Church declare its expectations from him, and acquaint him with the interest it takes in his spiritual welfare, the prayers it offers that grace may abound in him, and the hopes it conceives of his establishment in every good and holy way. What a communion would each parish present, did the Church in each parish but avail itself of the opportunities which our Baptismal Service commits to her !

Nor let the Child himself be forgotten, the beloved subject of this variety of interests. The large concern that was thus taken for his spiritual growth, would induce him, under God, to feel interested for himself. He would be desirous of acquitting himself of his obligations ; he would acknowledge that the vows of God were upon him : expectations continually expressed, would beget continual effort on his part to accomplish them. He would feel, that he was not only a sharer in the blessings of the family, but a sharer also in the blessings of the Church, the great family of our common Saviour, whom as he saw others delight to serve, he would delight to serve also. Here would be a reality in Baptism : he would see it acknowledged by his dearest friends, and he would acknowledge it also. It would be presented to his experience

as a tissue of privileges, connected with love, and kind concern, and blessing from all with whom he had to do. A “Communion of Saints” surrounds him ; and the loveliness of the society would induce him to become a saint also. “ I will go also.”¹

You see then, how vast an advantage this argument would give to all the parties concerned in the spiritual welfare of the Child,—the Minister, the Parent, the Sponsor, the Church. “ Remember the profession which you made unto God in your Baptism.” Nor can we suppose that these advantages would be lost on the Child, or that a child of such prayers and such interests could perish.

I conclude this enumeration of ADVANTAGES with a few remarks on the SIMPLICITY, GENERALITY, CERTAINTY, and REALITY of this proposed mode of spiritual renovation.

It is SIMPLE. This is an age when we seem to be returning to our allegiance to the sovereignty of common sense. Prejudices, inveteracies, fashions, habits, and prescriptions, are now subjected to discussion and to correction. And as our regard for common sense prevails, so will the simplicity of a measure be one of its surest recommendations to our acceptance. How exquisitely simple is the principle of the Bible Society ! it is upon this, under God, that its existence rests. “ The Bible is the word of God,

¹ Zech. viii. 21.

and it is the duty of every man to circulate it."—It is the simplicity of the new system of education also which has introduced it to such general practice. It is the simplicity of the above interpretation which constitutes its beauty; there is no complication of human effort, or intricacy of human system; here all is simple: God has given a promise of blessing to you and yours, all that you have to do, is to accept and apply it.

It is GENERAL. It is a mode of amelioration adapted to every class, relation, and character. It suits all conditions from the throne to the cottage. The rich, the poor, the learned, the unlearned, the weak, the strong, equally need it. Whether a man is a king or a subject; whether in trade or profession; whether son or parent, young or old, whatever his situation or circumstances, all need to be Christians. As a man you are God's creature, as a redeemed man you are his reconciled and renewed creature. All that relates to human circumstance and condition is contingent and incidental; you may live in a mansion or a poor-house, you may know much or little, you may rule a kingdom or a family, you may be young Samuel or aged Eli; but you stand before God accepted or rejected, as he beholds you in Christ Jesus. Soon these earthly distinctions and relations shall be no more; earth with all its toil, its pleasure, and its pursuits, will have past away;

and the question to be asked for eternity will be, not only were you a man, but were you a Christian man,—a man made whole by faith in Christ,—who lived on his promise, found your happiness in the performance of his precept of holiness, are justified by his blood, sanctified by his Spirit, and now seek to be glorified in his glory? Baptismal regeneration accepts you as a fallen creature, without regard to outward condition, presented in faith of the promise, and imparts to you that thing, which as a mere man, by nature, you cannot have,—the graces, the powers, and the privileges of the Gospel.

It is CERTAIN. So surely as God is true, his promise is true, and the performance of it infallible and certain. That his promise to the children of believers as practically applied by our Church in her Baptismal Service is not attended with more frequent accomplishment, is sufficiently accounted for, I trust, above. The failure is not on his part but on our own : it is not that God's promise fails, but that man's faith fails. "God is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness, but is," on the contrary, "long-suffering to us-ward."¹ It is the negligence, and indifference, and unbelief of man which deprive the promise of its effect. In fact we counteract God ; we expose our children to the follies and vanities of a

¹ 2 Peter iii. 9.

world, which, on their part, we have solemnly renounced; we have courted the enemies of God, instead of having abjured them; we have roused the corrupt desires of the heart by worldly lures and excitements; perhaps we have taught our children to smile at the aid of the Spirit as enthusiasm, even of that Spirit, of whom we are teaching them to say at the very time,—“who sanctifieth,” is sanctifying “me, and all the elect people of God.” Let the promise only be fairly tried out in practice, and who shall impeach the fidelity of the God of all grace who has made it? It is the very nature of faith to wait: and “here is the patience and faith of the saints;”¹ for the believing Parent or Sponsor, who on the ground of the promise presents his child to “the Communion of the Saints” for the Baptismal sign and seal and pledge of the blessing, never to quit his hold on the promise in favour of his child so long as the child enjoys his day of grace: that day extends throughout the whole life of the Child from his cradle to his grave. As faith devotes the Child to God at the first moment of his birth, so faith commits his soul to God at the last grasp of his life; nor will faith ever quit its hold of the promise, till the promise has arrived at its full accomplishment, and faith is perfected in sight above. Or if this should be

¹ Rev. xiii. 10.

deemed an excessive trial of assurance, as in these days of lapsed Reformation I am fearful that it may be, I would then say, let the case be fairly tried out ; let our Congregations be constituted on this principle ; let our children be thus introduced into “ the Communion of the Saints ; ” let faith and prayer and Sponsorial vigilance and encouragement, and renunciation of the world, and Christian privilege, and free grace, and the peculiar loveliness of Gospel virtues and Gospel happiness be harmoniously and proportionably displayed and exercised towards the Child and pressed upon his notice ; and if failure should apparently attend such a state of blessedness, which God might occasionally permit, to try our faith to the utmost, or to secure the sovereignty of his own will,—yet is there a living man who bears the Christian name, and who knows any thing of the love and mercy of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who would not pronounce such a state of things truly blessed ; and deem himself entitled, by the general promise to the Children of believers, to elevate his faith to an assurance that his Child, thus privileged with Baptismal blessings, should be a partaker of sanctification in time, and of glorification in eternity.

But indeed is not this objection to our statement, drawn from the failure of the Baptismal promise rather hypothetical than substantial ? For though it be admitted, that the children

of believing Parents do too often defeat their hopes ; yet in the present low estimate of Baptismal efficiency, it must be almost impossible for the objector to prove his case : for where are even the religious Parents, who have brought up their children with a continual reference to their Baptismal vows and privileges, a frequent pleading of God's promise to the children of believers, and a steady and unvarying faith in the certainty of its performance ? It is much to be feared, that the paucity of the instances which could be found, would render the decision of the question from actual experience almost impracticable. Let not our faith then be staggered by this or any other objection ; let us accept the promise as that of a faithful God, and in the use of means calculate on its certain accomplishment.

It is REAL. If I may judge of the general acceptance of these sentiments, by those who may favour them with a perusal, from the acceptance they have first met with, from those to whom I have occasionally mentioned them ; I must be prepared to expect, that, from the novelty of the statement, at this day, now removed nearly three centuries from the period of the Reformation, the reality of these Baptismal blessings will be questioned. It will I know be said, “ Doth he not speak parables ? ”¹ it is all

a fable, a tale to amuse children. Had I but the teachableness of children to deal with, I should have no apprehension of quickly proving the reality of my case to their satisfaction: "In malice be ye children, but in understanding be men."¹ Were we but men of God in spiritual understanding, combining with the same the simplicity of the child, we should resemble "those reverend Fathers and great Divines in the days of King Edward the Sixth,"² who themselves acknowledged its blessedness, by proposing it to our acceptance; and who have left it on record, sealed with their own blood, for our perpetual encouragement and improvement. Had we but the faith of the Reformers, we should enjoy the blessedness of their Reformation. It is this faith which can alone introduce that religion of grace, which is founded upon the promise; and for want of which our Liturgy has become too much a dead and unintelligible letter. It is faith only that can give the letter spirit; and realise to us the blessed experience, that generally every promise belongs to us which we have faith enough to apply to ourselves. Faith gives the grand reality to Christianity; it "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."³ The Reformers were men of faith; it was their great object to reform the Church from dead works, and con-

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 20.

² Thirtieth Canon.

³ Heb. xi. 1.

fidence in things that are seen, to the great realities of faith, and the substance of things not seen. They rebuilt their Reformed Church, therefore, on the promise of a faithful God ; and as the faith of men acted on that promise, so were they to receive the blessing. “ Believe ” then and “ be established,” you shall find the blessings of the promise to be real : but “ except ye believe, surely ye shall not be established ; ” unbelief shall deprive you of the substance of the promise ; and shall render it nugatory and vain.

Here then is a summary of ADVANTAGES arising from our proposed interpretation of the Baptismal Service of no equivocal character ; and which, if carried into effect in all our parishes, could not fail, by the blessing of God, of effecting our National Reformation. In this Christianity, there would be a substantial reality : it would be a union of holy men, combined to make all holy around them, and to change a community of mere men with a Christian profession, into a “ Communion of Saints ” with Christian graces, duties, and privileges ; proving in lively experience “ what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.”¹ It would be making us just to our privileges, by bringing us back to our principles. The Church of England is capable of producing all this blessedness : let us

¹ Rom. xii. 2.

shew that we know her real value by calling her virtues forth into active agency, and giving them one universal spread throughout the land, which she takes under the shadow of her wing. But once recommend this interpretation to general adoption in our parishes ; and like the witnesses in the Apocalypse, we may trust that “ the Spirit of life from God ” shall “ enter into them,” and they shall stand “ upon their feet.”¹ By this interpretation we render all our formulæ intelligible—we display the beauty and symmetry and admirable proportion of the Church to which we belong—we exhibit in lively reality the blessedness of “ the Communion of Saints ”—we improve the administration of the whole service of our Church—and the blessings of “ the Communion of Saints ” being once felt and improved, we should naturally be desirous of cultivating them by a more frequent observance of the means of grace—we should then give to each Sacrament that honour which is its respective due—from the blessings of this communion the Reformation of our Ecclesiastical Polity must necessarily arise, as well as the restoration and preservation of unity in the Church—education would receive general improvement both in its principles and practice—the doctrine of election would be rescued from the misrepresentations of caricature, and would

¹ Rev. xi. 11.

appear practical as it is lovely, “full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons”—“the praise of the glory of his grace” would be secured to God, whose honour demands that man should be saved by grace alone—and that grace would be doing its own peculiar work in correcting the false principle of human improvement by the Law, which both Churchman and Layman have been so long and so ineffectually urging—it would afford to Ministers, and Parents, and Sponsors, and to every member of the Church, a new argument, to insist on the becoming conversation of every Churchman, from the blessedness of his Baptismal privileges, and the solemn responsibility of his Baptismal vows—and the excellence of this interpretation would receive its full confirmation, in the *simplicity, generality, certainty, and reality* of this promised mode of spiritual renovation.—What a burst of blessedness is here ! till I had entered the portal of our Church by this avenue—salvation by the promise and not by the precept—I formed no idea of the beauty, the symmetry, the sublimity, the loveliness, and the perfection of the communion to which I belonged. My eyes were long opening to the real blessedness-of our condition ; and like a man before whose enraptured view, a splendid prospect bursts at once upon his eye, I could scarcely believe the reality of the scenery I was admiring. But I have reason to bless God, for having,

as I trust, he has, conducted me to this land of substantial grace, this city of living blessings ; and that I belong to a National Church, which, retrograde as she is in practice from the purity of her Reformation, contains within herself every principle of sound renovation ; and which only claims to have that principle admitted to active operation, that under the Divine Spirit, she may diffuse her graces over every parish in the land, and combine every member of her household in one large and lovely family of Christian amity, and joy, and peace.

But is it possible, it may be said, that effects so truly excellent can spring from a cause so apparently small ?

Let it be remembered, that there is nothing small with God ; that every "day" has its "small things;"¹ that both analogy and experience confirm the justice of our principle ; and that as all things in nature and providence originate in the seed, so that grace has its seed-time also. And this is in my view, no small confirmation of our principle ; it harmonises with the ordinary character of the divine operations.

All things have their nurseries, where their principles begin to vegetate before they flourish and ripen into effect. Grace has it nursery as well as the seed its hot-bed. And, I own, I form

¹ Zech. iv. 10.

no contracted notion both of the rectitude and efficiency of the above principle of spiritual renewal, because it is both philosophically and spiritually true. Our system is a system of principles : it begins in the nursery at the first gasp of the Infant's life ; it begins before in the faith of the believing Parent ; and the first embrace which the Child receives, is not that of natural affection alone, but of lively gratitude and ardent thanksgiving to God for this mortal—immortal gift. Wise men look to nurseries for effects ; unwise men look for effects without nurseries. It is here that the wisdom of our Church is eminently displayed ; she begins in the nursery. The Child is there a child of God ; and in this blessed persuasion she encourages the faithful Parent and Sponsor to educate him with persevering and undoubting faith. Her principle receives complete confirmation from all the operations of God. In *nature* one atom of matter originates a splendid universe : in *providence* one grain of wheat renews the yearly crop : in the dispensation of *grace*, a swaddled infant, upheld by human arms, and fed by human milk in a stable, exhibits the nursery of *glory* ; and in the power of grace actually imparted in sanctifying influence to the soul, “ the path of the just is as the shining light which shineth more and more to the perfect day.”¹ The analogy

¹ Prov, iv. 18.

of God in all his four kingdoms, *nature, providence, grace, and glory*, commends our principle; and the word of God expressly and repeatedly confirms the same. It remains only for us to trust him with the performance of his own promise ; and our trust will best be evinced, in training our children, not as children of nature, but as children of grace, or that we would be consistent in practically treating them, as we teach them to call themselves, “ members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.”

And here, My Dear Friend, let me ask, do not the times, and the signs of the times, demand from us an active co-operation with the Spirit of God in carrying this principle of spiritual renewal into effect ? are there any means now in action apparently adequate to this purpose ? can any reasonable man expect this renewal from our present mode of education ? I own, that to me, such an expectation appears to be perfectly childish. Nor does it appear to me that after the defeated hopes of six thousand years in attempting to ameliorate mankind by the rigour of Law enforcing our corrupt nature to an impossible obedience, any thing but failure can attend our present expectations of success. We are not better than our fathers ; and the Law which has failed to produce this effect in their days, will not produce a different effect in ours. Let us then try this simple mode of reno-

vation, proposed by our Church in her best days. The experience of the last thirty years gives us ample encouragement. Which of us that looks back even for twenty years, and recollects the monthly meetings of a few friends in a private house, could then have believed that the Church Missionary Society would have attained such a pitch of expansive usefulness, as it has pleased God to confer upon it? and in the infancy of its operations who could have anticipated the spread of the Bible Society's influence over the people, and nations, and languages it embraces? Man loves complexity; and often impedes his own designs by the intricacy of the process he devises to effect them. God loves simplicity; and the more simple the principle, the more is his honour advanced. And what principle is so well calculated to advance the glory of the latter day, the dawn of which perhaps our own eyes are even now beholding, as this which secures all the honour of that glory to God, while it provides at once the most simple, and the most ready mode of renovating human society, and with a Christian profession imparting a Christian spirit also. We complain of the degraded condition of Christian society; we pray that it may be improved: behold the means at hand: all is ready in the Baptismal provisions of our Church: all that we have to do is to be just to our own advantages, and true to the remedy prepared for us. Let us but trust the promise,

use the means, water them with our prayers, realise them by our faith ; and here will be a just ground of expectation that our Israel shall be an Israel of God from Dan to Beersheba ; that every parish shall exhibit a Christian communion, that dissent shall be merged in the universal blessedness of such a dispensation ; and that our land shall become what the civil magistrate designs by our Ecclesiastical Establishment, a land of vital Christians : and without doubt, at that hour, the whole earth shall call her blessed.

If an apology be demanded of me for the length to which this letter has extended, I must rest it upon the two following grounds. The first, that in tracing out the advantages resulting from the above interpretation of our Baptismal Service as applied in practice, a field of blessedness gradually opened to me, of the extent of which, at first, I was by no means aware ; the second, that I would speak as to wise men ; and shew them the advantages of the principle recommended, before we proceed to state the means of carrying it into effect. Practical men must be convinced of the advantage of a practice before they adopt it ; and, I trust, that the ADVANTAGES enumerated are so evident, that we are now prepared to enter upon the consideration of the means, which yet remain to us to advance and to secure them.

LETTER IX.

**MODES HUMBLY SUGGESTED OF CARRYING THE
SAME INTO EFFECT.**

THE *first* point to be aimed at here is,—**LET EVERY MAN BE FULLY PERSUADED IN HIS OWN MIND THAT THE ABOVE INTERPRETATION OF OUR BAPTISMAL SERVICE IS JUST; AND THAT IF CARRIED INTO EFFECT THROUGHOUT THE LAND, BY EVERY CHURCH IN EVERY PARISH, IT WOULD WITH GOD'S BLESSING, PRODUCE A NATIONAL REFORMATION OF MANNERS, AND CHANGE A COMMUNITY OF MERELY PROFESSING CHRISTIANS, INTO A COMMUNION OF SAINTS EXHIBITING THE VITAL ENERGIES OF CHRISTIAN FAITH AND LOVE.**

Let every man endeavour to look at the question apart from prejudice and affection; and with truly Berean ingenuousness rise above the discouragements of novelty and desuetude, and *nobly* pause to inquire whether these things are so. *Desuetude* might well discourage us; for with the loss of the above interpretation of Baptism, all spirituality had well nigh

disappeared from our Church ; and our present more favourable condition presents but too formidable obstacles to our recovery to sound principles of Baptismal Regeneration. But let not the fear of *novelty* discourage us ; for there is in fact nothing novel in the view we have given : on the contrary it is the doctrine of our sainted forefathers of the Reformation for which we plead : and it is nothing but desuetude that clothes it with the air of novelty. Let every member of our Church, especially every minister of it, consider the plain terms of the Baptismal Service, as well as its general spirit and bearing ; let him compare these with the Liturgy and each particular formulary ; let him mark the harmony, and beauty, and consistency, and integrity, which this interpretation gives to the whole Book of Common Prayer : let him review the private sentiments of our Reformers, exactly harmonising with this view of their public authorised expression of them ; let him superadd to this, the concurrent testimony of the Reformed Churches ; let him reflect that it is unbelief alone which opposes this interpretation, while faith in the promise beholds it practicable as it is desirable ; let him dwell on the manifold **ADVANTAGES**, which directly and necessarily flow from it—and let him then say, whether any other interpretation of our services can be conceived, so justly consentaneous both with their

letter and spirit, so effectual for the purpose of spiritual renovation for which they were designed, at once so truly honourable to God, and so truly beneficial to man?

The *next* point after conviction—is, TO SET ABOUT PRACTICALLY TO CARRY OUR CONVICTION INTO EFFECT.

And here example is of the last importance. Let every member, but especially minister of our Church, introduce his child into the Church for Baptism “on Sundays and other Holy-days, when the most number of people come together;” let the Child, on no other account than that of mere necessity, be baptised in private; but let the notice of the “great Congregation” be earnestly excited, that the Child may have an interest in the prayers and sympathies of “the Communion of Saints,” into which it is thus publicly and conspicuously introduced; let the minister especially, selecting those of his Congregation who are the most approved for piety, assign the spiritual charge of his Child to them as its Sponsors, that the people having this public testimony of his own estimation of the importance of the Sacrament, may follow his example, and thus effect that word of their minister, which his own practice recommends and confirms. “Doubt ye not therefore but earnestly believe,” is an address that comes with bad grace from the mouth of a minister, who

is not himself supposed to believe the reality of those privileges he is recommending to the faith of another.

Again—LET THIS INTERPRETATION BE EXPLAINED AT LARGE FROM THE PULPIT.

An entirely new light will thus be thrown on all the service of the Church ; and the minister need not be afraid of not exciting an interest by his exposition ; for his hearers will doubtless confirm the usefulness of it by expressing their satisfaction at the view he has exhibited of blessings and privileges hitherto unknown to them, and for his disclosing to them the beauties and consistencies of a worship, of the perfection of which they were before but little aware. The blessings of a Christian communion, is what few seem to understand, and still fewer to expect from their union with our Church. But let the minister encourage this expectation, and it gives a new spirit to the whole of his administration of the service ; it tends to dissipate weariness, to support the attention, and to give an energy and feeling unfelt before. And this is an improvement which the people will soon acknowledge : they will answer the call with alacrity, when the minister invites with earnestness, “ Let us pray ; ” a general interest in the service will be taken by the Congregation, because a general interest is demanded by the voice and manner of the minister. The minister is a saint leading “ the Communion

of the Saints ; ” and as they have fellowship one with another, so through that communion of the Spirit, which unites them in fellowship “ with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ,” ¹ they feel the Church to be, what it is ever intended to be to the faithful, “ none other but the house of God, and—the gate of heaven.” ²

ANOTHER means is—A DISTINCT AND FREQUENT INQUIRY FROM THE PULPIT OF PARENTS AND SPONSORS, WHETHER THEY ARE INDEED TRAINING UP THE CHILDREN, FOR WHOM THEY ARE RESPONSIBLE TO THE CHURCH, ACCORDING TO HER REQUISITIONS IN THE DUE DISCHARGE OF THEIR VOWS, AND THE DUE ENJOYMENT OF THEIR PRIVILEGES.

Let them not only be urged to duty by a sense of responsibility, but encouraged to it by the blessedness which attends the discharge of it both to the Sponsor and the Child. Let the minister declare his expectations, that their industry in teaching will, under God, be the means of preparing their charge to understand and enjoy his ministry, and his hope that when the Child is transferred to his public care as minister to be catechised in the Congregation, he will rejoice his heart and that of the Church, by the competency of his knowledge, and his experimental acquaintance with spiritual things. Let them frequently be reminded that the hopes

¹ 1 John i. 3.

² Gen. xxviii. 17.

of the Church are the young of the flock, that they are entrusted to Sponsors expressly to bring up and to educate for her, and that both minister and people, as well as the Child, are most deeply interested in the success of their Sponsorial labours.

And let not the Child be forgotten in addresses from the pulpit: let him be especially addressed on the subject of his Baptism; be told into what a blessed communion he was then admitted; and how well adapted it is to make him happy: how the minister is interested for him, how the Church feels for him, and prays for him, and how much she expects of him: that the honour of Christ demands his growth in grace, and his improvement in all spiritual good; that this generation is passing away, and that the Church looks to him for a succession of ministers and saints, which shall maintain the cause of Christ upon earth, when that generation is gone. Topics of this character often addressed to the children of the Church, would, while the Sponsors "call upon them to hear sermons," be the strongest inducement to their compliance, from the encouragement and benefit they derive from them.

Let this means be well supported by that which the Church appoints for the express purpose of communicating elementary knowledge,
**—A FREQUENT AND PERSEVERING INCULCATION
AND EXPOSITION OF OUR ADMIRABLE CATECHISM.**

Of all elementary Catechisms which I have ever seen, for the purpose of expository instruction, this appears to me to be the best. It is at once short and comprehensive, embracing in their rudiments all the leading topics of faith and practice. But as one of its excellencies is its brevity, since it is in this respect exactly suited to the memory of childhood, so another excellence is, that it forms the groundwork of inexhaustible exposition ; and this exposition is indispensable to the Child's complete comprehension of the letter. And I must own that a facility of *vivâ voce* instruction in the opening of our Catechism to the common mind, by apt illustration and experimental application, appears to me to be the highest possible didactic attainment of a minister of Christ. I had rather possess this one talent than all the glitter of human eloquence, and all the splendour of brilliant accomplishment that have yet enraptured mankind. It is the most excellent because the most useful : it is seen in its choicest exercise in the parables and conversations of our All-eloquent Redeemer. It is not the offspring of great talents, but of a simple soul : and that soul which is most imbued with the simplicity of Christ, will be the most successful imitator of his irresistibly interesting manner of communicating knowledge. The grand secret of Catechetical exposition appears to me to be, as in all true eloquence, to endeavour to impart your

own impression of the subject to the heart of the learner. All didactic harshness of manner should be avoided ; and that love which it is the object of the Catechist to inculcate on the Catechumen, should be the acknowledged vehicle in which he conveys his instruction. It is not an understanding head merely that he aims to attain by his address, but “an understanding heart.” Let the heart but once understand the truth in its blessedness, and the affections will soon press the other powers of the soul to concurrence. Let catechising then be experimental ; let it be kindly addressed to the heart of every learner ; let it exchange its stiffness, and coldness, and generality, for condescension, and interest and individual application ; let it be constantly repeated : and if I might hope that this present day of fastidiousness, and consequently of indifference, would admit of such a wish, may the day arrive, when the Church is daily assembled, and the little ones of the flock periodically either present themselves, or are presented by their Sponsors for Catechetical instruction ; when the minister receives them with smiles of holy joy, as a parent does his children ; and when the whole collected Church testifies the interest it takes in this scene, by many a glistening eye, and many a hearty prayer ; and anticipates, with joy, the realising of its hopes, that thus “our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth,” and “that our

daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace.”¹

ANOTHER means similar to the above is,—THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THIS INTERPRETATION IN OUR SUNDAY AND OTHER SCHOOLS.

If possible, the superintendence of these nurseries of principle should be submitted to active, and intelligent, and faithful ministers of our Church. In communicating the faculty of reading, we are communicating a powerful talent, good or bad, as to its use or abuse: it may preserve us from the barbarism of nature, but it may rebarbarise us also with principled infidelity and corrupt over-refinement. It is only a Christian education that can form a Christian man. Let the minister then and teacher of our schools, be thoroughly imbued with the spirit of this interpretation, and there will be a Gospel sweetness of manner recommending this Gospel interpretation of Baptism, throughout all their conduct with the children. The children are children of God, recognised as such by the Church, and it is the minister’s and teacher’s object, to prepare them as inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Their Baptism will be constantly referred to; they will be called upon to realise the vows and promises of their Sponsors; and all the arguments derived from their Baptismal engagement, which have been so frequently

¹ Psalm cxliv. 12.

insisted on throughout these letters, will be continually applied. This is the true mode, according to my judgment, to make the whole population sound Churchmen. Shew them the excellence of the system, by that which is of all arguments the most persuasive, their own experience of its blessings. Men may be attached to the Church from birth, and country, and education, and fashion, and temporal interest or policy; but the firmest supporter of it, is the man who recognises it as a communion of living spirituality, the mother of his holy joys and consolations, the security for every temporal blessing, "the pillar and ground of" that "truth"¹ which gives him hope of a glorious immortality. This is the man who with highest relish of its blessings, and therefore, most cordial prayers for its success, will take up the Psalmist's words, "Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good."² This man is a true Churchman: convinced by his own experience of the value of Baptismal privileges, it will be his unremitting endeavour as a Parent, a Sponsor, or as one of the Church, to give the largest honour to that from which he has derived so much. And as all the formularies of our Church are understood and enjoyed, in the degree that men really experience "the Communion of the Saints," and as this communion is only intel-

¹ 1 Tim. iii. 15.

² Psalm cxxii. 9.

ligible, I apprehend, to its real extent as we behold these formularies coupled with the Baptismal Service,—the Churchman, thus formed, will be the most speaking practical comment of the excellency of Baptismal privileges, and will be the most effectual supporter of that Ecclesiastical communion to which he belongs.

Again—LET THIS INTERPRETATION BE THE SUBJECT OF THE MINISTER'S PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH HIS PEOPLE.

Let him request those of his flock of the most decided piety, to begin this renewed system of introducing their Children for Baptism, when the Congregation may be expected to be the largest; let the ceremony be of a decidedly public character; let the administration of it be conspicuous before the whole Church; let the minister by his voice and manner challenge the attention of the Church, and doubtless his challenge will be answered. And let another and another be persuaded to follow this example, till the habit of Public Baptism is restored and established. Let the minister also endeavour to induce the most decided Christians of his flock, voluntarily to stand forward as Sponsors to any Parent, who may be desirous of engaging their attention to his Child; let him inculcate upon them the real charity of the act, the blessedness of this labour of love, the benefit they are conferring on the Church, the life and vigour they are giving, not to the piety of one

parish alone, but to an Establishment, which, if thus animated by a living soul, would diffuse, what she proposes to do, and what she is in her institution so admirably calculated to do, spiritual life and blessing throughout the land. Were the men and women of lively piety in every Congregation, both among rich and poor, to come forward thus, and to strengthen the hands of their minister, the administration of Baptism would be a blessed Sacrament indeed ; exciting the sympathies of the Church, exercising its charity, animating its faith, and convincing it of the reality of “the Communion of the Saints,” by its own vital experience of the blessings, which such a communion was actually producing. It might then indeed be said to every parish from Cornwall to the Tweed, “arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.”¹

ANOTHER means in aid of the former, is—
THE KIND AND TEMPERATE USE OF THE DISCRETION WITH RESPECT TO SPONSORS, INTRUSTED TO THE MINISTER IN THE TWENTY-NINTH CANON.

“ Neither shall any person be admitted God-father or Godmother to any child at Christening or Confirmation, before the said person so undertaking hath received the holy Communion.’ I say the *kind* and *temperate* use of this discre-

¹ Isa. ix. 1.

tion, for were it otherwise than kind and temperate, it would but disgust, whom it was intended to benefit and encourage. That all the parties may be known to the minister, notice of the proposed Baptism shall be given by the Parents "over night, or in the morning before the beginning of morning prayer." And if the latter season of notice be deemed too short by the minister, he "by his discretion shall appoint" the Baptism, "either immediately after the last Lesson at Morning Prayer, or else immediately after the last Lesson at Evening Prayer." Thus sufficient time is allowed to a minister, officiating in a parish of reasonable compass, to ascertain the character of the Sponsors, to instruct them in the nature of the duty they are about to undertake if ignorant, or if they are either so ignorant or so deficient in character, as to give just cause of scandal, let them be mildly advised to give place for the present, till such ignorance or scandal be corrected. Or, should the case be one where open and notorious scandal must ensue, let the minister kindly but firmly resort to his last resource, and express his sorrow that he is compelled to appeal to the authority of the canon, and to exclude him or them from the office of Sponsor, on the ground the Church allows; that as they have not received the one Sacrament they are not deemed fit to become Sponsors in the other. I state this as the last

resource of needful discipline : not to be resorted to but in a case of extremity : but like all discipline, conducted at once with firmness and kindness, were it once resorted to, and the circumstance generally known, and perhaps mentioned from the pulpit with evident regret, it might, with God's blessing, be the means of checking the presumption of ignorance and incompetency, and of inducing Parents to a more cautious selection of Sponsors to be presented to the Church. The evil of unqualified Sponsors is deep and inveterate ; and, like all old diseases, it admits but of gradual cure ; it is the long-suffering kindness of the Gospel combined with its firmness, that, with the blessing of the Spirit, can alone effect it.

ANOTHER most striking means of giving this interpretation effect is—**THE MINISTER'S OWN EXAMPLE IN HIS FAMILY.**

Let this interpretation of Baptismal blessings pervade all the education of his children, and all his dealing with them ; and let his relations, and friends, and parishioners feel, that the man believes his own doctrines, by his steady and consistent perseverance in giving them effect by his own practice. The blessedness of thus acting from faith in the promise, and assuming that his children are thus really included in the covenant of salvation, no man knows, but the man who is actually exercising this faith, and enjoying the blessing. So far is this con-

fidence from occasioning a false security, that there will be a constant vigilance, lest any of his children "fail of the grace of God."¹ This father will do what he can to educate his own children; and when compelled to part with them to another, the spiritual character of the instructor will be the grand leading consideration. In such a Parent, while the infirmities of his nature are more or less putting his principles to a daily test, both with respect to himself and his child; though anger, and impatience, and lassitude, and neglect, and forgetfulness, the frequent expressions of a corrupt nature in himself, will ever be impeding his own design; and the frowardness, and obstinacy, and petulance, and corruption of childhood, will often stagger his faith, as to the real existence of grace in his child; yet there will be a constant recurrence to his principles, an habitual resort to the promise, and a persevering pleading of it in prayer, which, under the influence of the Spirit will keep him firm to his purpose, and will not suffer his faith to fail. From what oppressive anxieties both as to the souls and bodies of our children should we be daily preserved, could we but thus, in simple faith on the promises, commit them unreservedly to God! "Lord, from thee they came; Lord, to thee they are devoted; we commit all their concerns and

¹ Heb. xii. 15.

interests to thee both in time and eternity : thou wouldest have us to " be careful for nothing,"¹ Lord give us grace to cast all our care upon thee, and faith to believe that thou dost indeed care for us. Happy, thrice happy are the Parents that are in such a case ; blessed, thrice blessed is the family which has thus practically the Lord for its God. Let this be the character of the minister's family, and Baptismal privileges will then appear in their true reality and loveliness, from the holy savour they diffuse on all who partake of the blessings of the house.

And could I anticipate the return of simplicity among us, I would venture to suggest ANOTHER means, which might be expected to give considerable interest to " the Communion of Saints " in carrying this interpretation into effect.—LET THE ATTENTION OF THE CHURCH BE ESPECIALLY CHALLENGED.

Suppose the Baptism were to take place in the afternoon, let the names of the Parents and Sponsors of the Infant or Infants proposed to be introduced into the Church, be given publicly from the desk, in the morning, and the interest of the Church be excited, and its prayers requested in favor of the parties. Good neighbourhood would here rest, not upon the interchange of a few kind offices merely, but upon the sure ground of Christian sympathy and

¹ Phil. iv. 6.

love. I am well aware that this expansion of Christian love can distinguish Christian times alone; but I am concerned to shew that the blessings of Baptism if realised in Christian practice, according to the order of our Church, would be adapted to the purest state of the Church upon earth. For what is that reign of love which we anticipate under the full display of the Gospel, but the unfailing and universal interest which man shall take in his fellow, expanding itself from the child of his dearest affections, to his family, his parish, his county, his country, till it embrace the utmost circumference of man.

ANOTHER means of carrying this interpretation into effect would be—THE IMPROVED MODE OF TREATING CHILDREN WHICH WOULD NECESSARILY RESULT FROM IT.

Shall I be tolerated in the remark, that, at present, the approach of a child is considered as a signal for a joke. It is considered as the approach of a being so evidently inferior to ourselves, that our understanding may be relaxed in its tone, and our fancy and our wit may throw off all restraint to surprise or amuse him. In the apprehension of many, a child has as little claim to the exercise of reason, as to that of truth. But let the Child be invested in our esteem with his real character as “a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven,” and our estimate

of him will be raised. He will not then be considered merely as a play-thing, a creature to minister to our relaxation and amusement, the favorite object of our caresses and our sport; but amusement and caresses will be improved as means of elevating his mind to better things, and of leading his attention to what is useful and spiritual. Let him be treated with all the affection, tenderness, consideration, and forbearance that are due to the infirmities of the child, but with the prospective design, the attention, and discipline to form the future man, and that the man of God. This may be done, I conceive, without any forced precocity, or any premature elevation of the child into the man. Introduce but this improved mode of treating children, according to an improved estimate of their character, as indeed children of God, devoted to his service, and therefore to be educated to his praise, and you lay a broad foundation for the complete renovation of human society. Let this estimate once prevail, and in this result of our interpretation of Baptism, you have the most efficient means of giving permanency to its blessings.

ANOTHER mode of introducing this interpretation to notice is,—THE PROVISION OF NEW MEANS OF EXPLAINING IT TO CHILDREN.

Let elementary works be written for this purpose, simple and interesting, and adapted to their tender years.

First, let a new exposition of the Church Catechism be drawn up, with a plain and natural interpretation of its letter ; and I apprehend that the very sense we are here endeavouring to recommend, would be the direct effect of such interpretation. The ordinary expositions of the Catechism, which I have seen, have not appeared to me to be satisfactory, on this very account ; that they give not a Gospel but a legal view of its letter. They do not ground the exertions of the Child on the covenant promise of a faithful God, sealed to him in his Baptism, and investing him with his three eminent privileges ; much less do they teach him, that, in virtue of such covenant, the Holy Spirit is sanctifying him as an elect of God ; and that he should “ heartily thank his Heavenly Father, that he hath called him to this state of salvation, and pray unto God to give him his grace that he may continue in the same ” state of grace, all the days of his life, by the exercise of an unshaken faith. This seems to me to be the plain sense of the letter ; and it is this defect which makes many of the expositions of the Confirmation Service which I have seen, imperfect also ; that Service being intended to confirm and “ strengthen ” those, whom God has “ vouchsafed to regenerate—by water and the Holy Ghost,” and to whom he has “ given forgiveness of all their sins.”

To this exposition of the Catechism, may be
‘ a detailed exemplification of these prin-

ciples of grace by short tracts illustrating their effects in the various scenes of every-day life. If "history is philosophy teaching by example," the daily circumstances of the Christian life as selected from the Scriptures, the biography of the Church of Christ, the fugitive memorials of the present Christian world, and, if judiciously executed, original tales, might give a practical view both to the cottage and the drawing-room, of the suitableness and the excellency of salvation by the promise, as faith may apply it in all the ordinary occurrences of life.

To the above might be added, a manual of prayer extracted from the Baptismal Service and the Catechism, for the express use of our baptised Infants, to be taught them "so soon as they shall be able to learn," and to be put into their hands so soon as they can read. Such a book is much wanted; and if compiled with simplicity would be a most desirable aid to the nursery, both to the Child, its Mother, and Nurse. The most effectual mode of abolishing wrong practices is to introduce the right; and if such a manual were generally adopted, many a silly, not to say many a false and unscriptural prayer might be superseded by sound and appropriate petitions.¹ And after the Child has been well grounded in the incipient formularies

¹ If it should please God to give me ability and opportunity, I purpose to follow up the principles of these letters by a prac-

of our Church, let the "Articles of Religion" be studiously committed to memory; and let each of them, together with the various parts of the Liturgy be frequently and familiarly explained and confirmed by proofs from the Scriptures.

In a word let the Infant know and feel his privileges of Baptism, as he is able to comprehend and feel them: let a baptised atmosphere surround him; and let not only the daily attentions he is receiving from his Parents convince him that he is the child of their natural affection, but let the kindly spirit of holy nurture, and Baptismal blessedness convince him, that he is also a child of God, and adopted into the family of Christ.

Another means is—**A FREQUENT CALL UPON THE CHURCH TO INTEREST ITSELF IN THE SPIRITUAL WELFARE OF THE YOUNG OF THE FLOCK.**

Let it be frequently remarked from the pulpit, and in private, that the responsibilities and privileges of Baptism are confined neither to the Parents, the Sponsors, nor the Child, but that they are the common concern and property of every member of the Church. Here is a most

tical detail of their usefulness in a manual of prayer, selected from the Baptismal and its kindred services, for the express use of the baptised children of our Church: so that the expressions of the Services already committed to memory, may become the vehicles of prayer. This may be at once a help to the pious superintendence of the Parent and Sponsor, and to the devotions of the Child.

affecting ground of appeal to the prayers, and sympathies, and exertions of the whole “Communion of Saints.” Without a nursery the family must cease : hence the Church is drawing her constant supply ; hence the Church is to derive her permanency, her increase, her unceasing spread over the land and over the world. In her children is to be exhibited the Father’s love, the Saviour’s salvation, and the Spirit’s grace. When we are gone, they are to fill our place ; they are the heirs of our blessings, hereafter to grow up as “trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord.”¹ Let these and similar suggestions be often advanced, and from the first introduction of the Child at Baptism, to his maturity in grace, the Church will follow him with her prayers and her blessings, and find an increase of her own strength, in every accession of spiritual strength which her charitable interest has been the means of bestowing on the Child.

Further—LET THE FONT BE RESTORED TO ITS PLACE.

Without this means, Baptism will lose the conspicuous character it holds as the initiatory Sacrament of the Church. Let the font resume the place assigned to it in the days of the Reformation. It has a station of emblematic propriety at a convenient distance from the great West entrance of the Church ; let it be

¹ Isa. lxi. 3.

restored to its honourable station : and let that station be so directly opposite to the main entrance of the building, that none from that entrance can find access to the second Sacrament, but through the intervention of the first ; and let no man in our Church think, he can approach “ the Communion of the Saints,” in their highest exercise of that communion, the Eucharistical memorial of the Saviour’s dying love, till he has been introduced to that communion by the initiatory Sacrament, in which he has been cleansed from the guilt of sin by faith in the blood of Christ, and from the power of sin by faith in the Spirit of Christ. Thus situated, the font would act as a standing monitor to the Church. Its voice would be, “ remember your promises, remember your vows, remember your privileges, remember the blessed communion to which you belong : exercise your graces, discharge your duties, enjoy your privileges, as living members of a living head.” And the minister might point from the pulpit to the font, and tell his people that even the very stones of the font may cry out against them, if they are walking inconsistently with their profession : if they are deserting that path of the commandments in which they have promised to walk ; if they are lax professors of that faith which should give vital energy to their profession ; and if they are absorbed in the vanities of a world, which they have renounced ;

are indulging tempers and lusts which they have abjured ; and are the willing victims of Satan, against whom they have promised to array all their vigilance and all their power.

In our modern chapels, a Churchman looks in vain for any memorial of "two" Sacraments "as generally necessary to salvation :" and in too many of our churches, built or repaired since the Restoration, the font has given place to the stove in the aisle, and is degraded to some obscure station under a gallery, or to some blind corner inconvenient for any other purpose. One Sacrament alone seems to the eye to be necessary, and to have engrossed all our attention. But if we remove it from the eye, we remove it also from observation and memory. No memorial is sister to oblivion. If we would give the Sacrament due honour, and attract to it proportionate esteem, let the font resume its station of conspicuous dignity, and challenge what it deserves, the attention of all. There let the Child be openly admitted to his initiatory communion with the Church ; and "in the Baptism of Infants," let "every man present be put in remembrance of his own profession made to God in his Baptism."

But it is evident, My Dear Friend, that in order to set these wheels in motion, as means of producing and maintaining the blessings consequent on our interpretation of Baptism, those doctrines of grace must be restored to

us, in which this interpretation originated, and by the practical blessedness of which it was in its present mode bestowed on our Church. This gracious system of Baptismal regeneration was transmitted to us by our Reformers, as a rich blessing to give permanency and consistency to "the Communion of the Saints" from generation to generation. It seems then to be an indispensable means of effecting their purpose, that those sentiments of grace, and those views of the Gospel, which they held and taught, should be presented distinctly and openly to the Church; that the works of the Reformers, still extant, should be republished in their most accessible forms; and that the attention of the whole British Public from the highest to the lowest, from the most learned to the most ignorant, should be solicited to these almost sacred records, as the soundest interpreters of all the formularies of our Church.

As a further mode then—LET THE WORKS OF THE REFORMERS BE PREST ON THE ATTENTION OF THE PUBLIC.

With respect to the works of the Reformers, we have, in these days of reform, neither done justice to them nor to ourselves. Almost as many volumes have been expended, in discussing what their sentiments were, as would have conveyed the works of the original Reformers to the Public, and have afforded us the best opportunity of judging for ourselves. But

unless these works are reprinted, it is evident that every day is depriving us of this opportunity more and more. Fox's Book of Martyrs has nearly disappeared from our churches : Bishop Jewell's Defence of his Apology in answer to Harding, a massive folio, constituting a body of divinity, (the only copy of which exhibited for public perusal that I ever saw, was some years since in a church at Wells,) is dispersed into private libraries or has submitted to the same fate. Many of their writings have been destroyed by those who were ignorant of their value, and have in many instances been considered and treated as mere waste paper. It is true, some attempts have been made of late to renew our recollection of the principles of our forefathers, one especially, "the Fathers of the English Church," in eight octavo volumes : but this work, select and interesting as it is, it is said, found its way so slowly to public acceptance, that for some years not more than four hundred copies were sold ; and the remaining six hundred were disposed of by the efforts of those, who either as friends of the Editor, or of his labours, were unwilling that such an attempt should meet with no better reward than failure. But whatever attempt of this kind has been made, successful or otherwise, it is but too evident, that the Public have no adequate means of judging of the sentiments of the Reformers, on account of the scarcity of their works.

To remedy this defect then, I would propose that a Society should be instituted, called, "The Reformers Restored, or, the Society for reprinting the works of the Reformers." An associated effort, by the blessing of God, may effect that, to which individual exertion is unequal. Its capital and its numbers will at once afford notoriety to the attempt, sufficient means of effecting it, and security for its honest performance.

As a general hint as to the mode in which such a Society might accomplish its purpose, I would propose that it should edit works of three classes. First generally, both in volumes and tracts, the works of the Reformers throughout the sixteenth century, limiting their first publication to those of the "Marian days," and their immediate predecessors; then such works as are written in the spirit and sentiment of the Reformers till the sun of free grace sunk in our Ecclesiastical horizon with Carleton, Davenant,¹ and Hall. This latter selection to be left to the

¹ As an instance of the waning state of the doctrines of grace in the time of Davenant, I would refer to the reception of his well-known sermon preached before King Charles the First; on account of which he was called before the Privy Council, and as Fuller says with his truly characteristic quaintness, "presented himself on his knees, and so had still continued for any favour he found from any of his own function there present." See the particulars of the sermon and the Bishop's treatment on account of it in Fuller's Church History, xi. 138.

discretion of the managers. The second class should consist, of either the Corpus Confessionum, with a translation, or a harmony of the Confessions, either after the example of that printed at Cambridge 1586; or of a more brief and condensed kind, shewing, at one view, the concurring sentiments of all the Churches of the Reformation on every article of faith—a species of evidence much wanted at this day, as it is with us after the Scriptures the most conclusive. The third class might be simply historical, consisting either of whole works, or of extracts more immediately relating to the times of the Reformation: these might consist of extracts either of original authors of our own, such as Fox and Holinshed, &c. or of foreign historians such as Sleidan, or of historians whose works are compiled from these, such as Burnet's History of the Reformation, and the lives of the principal Reformers by Strype, &c. Thus the whole of the Reformation in its spirit, principles, and agents, might be presented to the Public, and from these ample documents, every man might judge for himself, what was the religion of our forefathers, and what that religion was which they intended to transmit to us.¹

¹ One powerful mode of recommending the principles of the Reformation to general notice, would be the introduction of the Fifth Book of Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity as a class book into our Universities. It contains in fact a body of sterling

As to the management of the Society, it is evident, that to give it fair operation, it must be under the direction of those who approve of the sentiments of the Reformers, and who will perseveringly present them to the public as their guides after the Scriptures of God. The management of it should be exclusively vested in a few, by whom a joint capital should be contributed; while the benefits of the Society should be universal; extending to every annual subscriber of a guinea or more such advantages from diminished price, and facility of attainment, as would not only encourage the admirers of the piety of the Reformers, but the curious, the learned, the antiquary, and the man of taste to afford their support. The grand object should be the Restoration of the Reformers to the notice of the British Public: mens' motives are their own: and while the Institution is especially intended for the good of the Church, its success must depend on the blessing of God in overruling the various motives which actuate human conduct to the support of his own cause.

Let the works of the Reformers then, be offered to the Public, in every variety of form in which they may attract the eye from the palace to the cottage. Let a well-printed legible

divinity, peculiarly adapted to members of our Established Church, and might well supersede some works of inferior merit which at present occupy the attention of our youth.

volume be the ordinary channel of communication ; which, by being constantly renewed in a good type and at a low price, may offer itself to the shelf of the collector, or may form the manual of the divine ; and let the most popular, and most interesting portions of these works, be printed as cheap tracts, to be dispersed over the country. A large portion of Fox's Book of Martyrs—that which forms the history of the Church during the sixteenth century, and the years immediately preceding, might be printed as one folio volume, to be had either in the volume, or in numbers to be circulated by the hawkers ; and it might again court public attention by being placed with the Book of Homilies in our Churches. Here would be a library for the divine, and supply the most approved comment both on the Scriptures and on the Liturgy of our Church. We should then be spared that worse than useless vanity of reading a number of unsatisfactory books ;¹ a sound religious taste

¹ It is indeed a worse than useless vanity, to consume life in reading an almost endless variety of books. How often is it the business of the latter part of life, to correct the false sentiments we have been acquiring during the former part of it ! I know not that a man of sound wisdom and piety, (and he must eminently possess both as needful qualifications for such a work) could confer a richer blessing on the world than either to condense the most approved books within a small compass, or to arrange the most approved authors on the various subjects of human knowledge in a compendious and intelligible syllabus.

would be induced, the best days of the Church would be renewed, and Popery, and Infidelity, and Semi-Pelagianism, and Semi-Gospelism would yield to "the truth" as it "is in Jesus."¹ The darkness of error being once dispersed by this recurrence to first principles, the light of divine illumination might under God be thus maintained in our Church; and by superseding controversy (for our sainted Fathers of the Reformation are happily both above the condition and provocation of controversy) their respected remains might tend to unite us their children in the bonds of Christian harmony and love.

Excuse these few hints, dropped incidentally on a subject which well deserves more ample consideration. If I have a wish fraught with blessings to our Church, the accomplishment of which would gratify me more than another, it is, I own, to see the works of the Reformers in every hand; but especially in the hands of us, who succeed them in the ministry of that Church, which they reformed by their wisdom and piety, and established by their constancy, their sufferings, and their blood. We should thus be saved from the errors and delusions of more modern times, and from the floating non-descript divinity, which the fashion of each generation subsequent to the times of the Reformers has dictated to its respective

¹ Eph. iv. 21.

day. And I do trust, that the time is not very distant, when the institution of such a Society may be announced to the Public, and the Reformers receive that practical testimony of favor and acceptance, which all parties in the Church acknowledge to be their due.

ANOTHER means of giving effect to the above interpretation in this our day, is—THE ESTABLISHMENT *OF A PERIODICAL WORK WHICH SHOULD BE DEVOTED TO THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE SENTIMENTS OF THE REFORMERS.

The tone of the Gospel as they preached, and defined, and felt, and lived it, should be that which the Editors of this work should pre-eminently recommend, and to which, as the true standard, they should seek to elevate the Christian literature of our times. I am not aware that any work of this character at present exists among us. Lives of the Reformers, and references to their times and sentiments and sufferings, are often given and alluded to; but I know not any Periodical Work that professes to give the truths of Christianity according to the standard of the Reformation. Indeed I must plainly say, that this defect in the Periodical Works with which I am acquainted, forms no small evil of the day. They are received as accredited exhibitions of the true Gospel, and are appealed to frequently as standards of sound divinity; but if the divinity of the Reformation be sound divinity; and if the statement of the

Gospel as laid down in the Seventeenth Article be sound divinity, I must confess that I meet with the tone and spirit of this divinity, as their prominent and distinguishing character in—shall I say any of these works that I have yet seen? adequately perhaps in none. I admit to the fullest extent the usefulness of many of them in attracting attention to the subject of religion, in imparting a variety of religious knowledge and information, and in recommending to public attention the politico-religious subjects of the day; and generally, in forming a rallying point for the religious world, they have been eminently useful, and God has doubtless blessed their efforts to the spread of religious truth. But in vain have I looked for the sweet, and racy, and lovely Gospel of our forefathers; those gales from Eden, which refresh and invigorate the soul of a helpless sinner groaning under the manifold infirmities and corruptions of his fallen nature, and needing daily supplies from that Gospel of spiritual life, which is a daily “revelation from faith to faith.”¹ Indeed one letter of Bradford’s will often contain more of the spiritual elixir of the genuine Gospel, than many pages, perhaps scores of pages of most of these works, some of which indeed are decidedly opposed to his tone of religion: and others of which, by their silence at least, seem to consider it as excessive, if not enthusiastic.

¹ Rom. i. 17.

Such a work, to be useful, should itself strikingly illustrate the blessedness of the principles it undertakes to recommend. There should be if possible, no controversy,¹ much less flippancy ; no party spirit or littleness of a junta, but every book that comes up to the standard of the Gospel, as exhibited by our Church in the Seventeenth Article, and its corresponding formularies throughout the Liturgy, should be fairly admitted to its due claim to the notice of the Public. Let the great principle of the Gospel, as taught throughout by our Church—*salvation by mercy in its origin, means, and end*, be the test of those authors it recommends. Let other books pass by unnoticed ; for it is surely a most unhappy effect of the too indiscriminate notice of authors, to advertise the very works which the critic condemns, and to which even critical condemnation gives a pernicious celebrity. Let such works never be mentioned, unless under circumstances of such glaring notoriety as will amply justify such mention. Let all books of equivocal character be passed by : and even books written purposely to controvert the principles of the work, receive no other answer, than the plain and full elucidation of the verity

¹ The characteristic excellence of the work,—the bringing forward in their own words the sentiments of the Reformers,—would go far to preclude controversy : it would be constantly supplying genuine documents by which every man might be able to judge for himself.

and excellence of those principles which the pages of the work perseveringly exhibit. Let it be its studious design to avoid every thing like collision, and to display the spirit of its doctrines by its practice. Let it breathe the love, the peace, the joy, the blessing of God's richest gift to man ; let its spirit be love, and its practice love ; and in the wide waste of human errors and prejudices, let the truth and the spirit of Christianity, as illustrated by our Church, afford in this work one distinguished spot, where truth and moderation meet together, and where kindness and love have convinced the heart of its error, before the pride of the understanding has arisen to its defence. Let a well-selected history of the lives, and sentiments, and sayings of the Reformers, both native and foreign, be continually brought forward, together with the most striking extracts from their works ; and let those authors of all times, subsequent or anterior, who have held similar sentiments, afford a continual illustration and recommendation of them. Let such authors of the present day as entertain these principles, receive ample encouragement to proceed in giving them in every way to the public : and let it be a work which the Holy Spirit may own in its design, execution, and temper ; to which the weary soul may resort for refreshment, and the wounded heart for consolation ; and in which the believer may meet a kindred spirit, to dissolve his doubts,

to dissipate his fears, to assuage his sorrows, to excite his graces, to confirm his faith, and to elevate his hope.

But you will say, where are the conductors of such a work to be found ? I have no doubt, that there are, in our Church, those who are capable both in piety, acquirement, and talent, of conducting such a publication : that there are many who desire it, I well know ; and that it would find the most ample encouragement and support I entertain no doubt. May God, of his mercy, grant, that this hint, as well as the former, may not be lost ; may it be the means of awakening the attention of those who are competent to the work, and may the principles enforced in these letters, form a point of union, and a bond of security, from which such a publication may emanate, and by which it may be maintained in asserting the sovereignty of grace, and the simplicity of the Gospel.

But there yet remains ONE MEANS, and that the most powerful of all, even that which is “the power of God”¹ unto salvation,—THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL,—even of that Gospel which formed the paramount subject of his ministry, who in the discharge of it “determined to know nothing—but Jesus Christ, and him crucified :”² and which, if I have ever yet been privileged to comprehend its letter, or to feel its

¹ 1 Cor. i. 18.

² Ibid. ii. 2.

spirit, is the genuine Gospel of our Established Church.

It is quite clear that no style of preaching can give effect to the above interpretation of our Baptismal Service, and its kindred formularies, which does not represent the Gospel in the same lovely point of view, and exhibit it as a rich provision of privileges, given for the express purpose of restoring a helpless sinner to the favor, and of investing him again with the holy image of his God, that hereafter he may be a partaker of his glory.

Can the preaching of mere morality effect this? will the telling the sinner to sin no more, on account of the evil consequences that will attend the commission of his sins, both here and hereafter, bring that helpless sinner to the cross of Christ for the pardon of his sins, or to the throne of Christ for the conquest of them?

Can the preaching of the medley-Gospel effect this? will the conviction that man can do his part from his own native goodness and power, and that Christ can and will make up the deficiency for him, humble the sinner in the dust, at the foot of the cross or throne of Christ, and honour the Saviour for having privileged him with a salvation, which he will allow at most to be only partial,—a half-measure,—and which as Bishop Hall expresses it, “parts stakes with Christ?”

Will the preaching of the Law, with all its holiness,

ness and all its terrors, even under the teaching of the Spirit, effect this ? It may generate “a spirit of bondage to fear,” but it never can animate us with a sense of privilege, and cause us to receive “the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father,”¹ and prayer becomes a blessing and a pleasure. To preach the Law is not to preach the Gospel ; nor can it ever give us a sense of “the kindness and love of God our Saviour.”² It is mistaking the vestibule of the palace for the presence chamber of the prince : the one may lead to the other ; but they must by no means be mistaken for the same.

Neither will that Gospel which consists in preaching the three fundamental doctrines of Christianity answer our purpose, or come up to the spiritual standard of our Church : I mean—the ruin of man by the fall—the recovery of man by the Saviour—and the regeneration of man by the Spirit.—These are indeed great and leading portions of the Gospel ; but they are but portions : they are not the whole counsel of God’s mercy to man. They are indeed some of the most brilliant gems of the crown ; but if they are presented to us isolated and alone, they are displaced from the setting, and lose their peculiar beauty, by losing their harmony and proportion. Thus detached from their sister privileges, they mourn their loss, from their own

¹ Rom. viii. 15.

² Tit. iii. 3.

incapacity to build up the saint, and to admit him into the liberty of adoption. Such a ministry converts under the blessing of the Spirit, and usually improves conversion into a growing sanctification ; but the growth is slow, because the beams of that free grace which enliven and invigorate are wanting : and the subject of this ministry does not usually arise above the misty regions of doubt and fear, to those of privilege and assurance. These upper regions of celestial day, the happy temperature of our blessed Church, are too frequently esteemed by such, a Terra Incognita, which it is presumption to explore : and “ make thy chosen people joyful ” to the benefits of which such Christians have an undoubted claim, is, in their mouths, not a prayer for themselves, but for others, in whom it is almost presumption, in their esteem, to accept the blessings which this prayer has drawn down upon them. It is thus, I conceive, that in the Evangelical world the growth of sanctification is dwarfed ; and even the pious members of our Church, who have a clear right to all its privileges, and all its blessings, come short of their birthright, and of the peculiar benefits of a communion which would mature them “ to that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ,” as to cause them to walk in the daily assurance, that they have a personal interest in the graces and glories of his salvation. Not esteeming themselves to be saints, they think they have no

right to the communion : and though they are constantly holding communion with the Church, in the exercise of the same means of grace ; yet a large portion of the sympathies and privileges of that communion is lost both to themselves and the Church, from their doubt, whether such sympathies and privileges do indeed belong to them. And it is by the fears and apprehensions of these excellent but timid believers that the Church is bereaved of the chief comfort of her children.

Neither do I conceive that the most accurate statement, and most finished definition of the Gospel laid down in our Seventeenth Article, preached *didactically*,¹ is that preaching of the Gospel which can carry the above interpretation into practice. Those great and glorious truths which constitute the Gospel mode of salvation may be detailed with perfect accuracy, and most

¹ To preach election merely didactically, is not, I apprehend, according to the Scripture manner ; and must necessarily be offensive both to the head and the heart of unconverted man. The faith of the one, and the humility of the other, are indispensable recipients of this doctrine of mere mercy. The pride of intellect must submit, that the understanding should receive that which intellect cannot comprehend ; and the arrogance of self-sufficiency must yield the heart to accept that which flows from sovereign mercy alone. Perhaps the most splendid passage in Scripture [Rom. viii. 28—39] is that in which the doctrine of election is exhibited most fully, explicitly, and particularly. And what passage of Scripture is so

correct proportion as a dry system of truth. There may be nothing to complain of in the statement; but the complaint will be of the absence of that unction, and feeling, and experience which, under the power of the Spirit, give that statement effect. A system of truth dryly and didactically exhibited, may be as inoperative in practice as a system of error: both may equally amuse or instruct the understanding, but neither of them may sink into the heart. The apprehensive faculty of a real believer is described as "an understanding heart;" it is "with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness;"¹ and it is the full heart of the preacher of the Gospel, teeming with all its rich and purifying righteousness, and illustrating the love, the joy, the peace, and the hope of the Gospel in his own spirit and ministry, that can best exhibit its heavenly tendency, and under the power of the Spirit flash self-condemnation on the conscience of the convicted sinner, while it pours the balm of peace and assurance into the troubled soul.

abundant in love, and joy, and hope, and privilege, and victory, and triumph? It is a challenge to every noble feeling of the soul to rejoice in the excellency, the security, and the blessedness of the love of God in Christ Jesus; and that feeling can only be expressed in the rapturous language of the Bride "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm." Song of Sol. viii. 6.

¹ Rom. x. 10.

To preach the Gospel then according to the Scriptures, the Liturgy of our Church, and the example of our Reformers, is, I apprehend, to pour out its blessings,—its graces, duties, and privileges—with a holy unction, from a heart deeply imbued with a sense of those blessings. It is doctrine illustrated by feeling, precept by practice, the letter by the spirit, the manifold word in all its experimental reality of suitability and loveliness. It is faith in the promise acted out in unreserved confidence in its fidelity and truth. It is the love of the Father commended in the gift of the Son—the grace of the Son commended in the constant application and daily use of him in his person and offices—the communion of the Spirit, the divine applicant of the grace of the Son to the human soul, commended in the fellowship with which he actually enfeoffs the believer both with the Father and the Son, and with the whole Church militant and triumphant. It is not a grace, or a duty, or a privilege drawn out into scholastic divisions and subdivisions to amuse the understanding, but all of them harmoniously interwoven with each other, the two former deriving confirmation and practicability from the felt enjoyment of the latter. It is salvation, presented as a rich and abundant gift in all its gracious and intelligible detail, from its rise in the bosom of God as the counsel of his will towards the redeemed soul, to its crowning consummation in glory;

and all this distinguished blessedness conveyed in experimental vitality from the heart of the preacher to the heart of the hearer.

Such, I conceive, is the Gospel of the kingdom as delineated in the Scriptures. It is no detraction either from the Old Testament, or from the ministry of our Lord, as exhibited in the four Gospels, to say, that the preaching of the Gospel was most perfect when the Gospel itself was most perfect. Now the dispensation of the Gospel was not perfect, till the Saviour had ascended on high, " spoiled principalities and powers," ¹ assumed his station on the right hand of his Father's glory, had received the gifts of the Spirit for men, and had actually exercised his prerogative as the King of his Church, by accomplishing the great promise of the Gospel, the gift of the Holy Ghost, to the primitive converts of the new dispensation of grace. John the Baptist, though " much more than a Prophet" ² as the forerunner of the Saviour, yet, great as he was, as he was only the forerunner of the kingdom, was inferior to the least in the kingdom of heaven when actually established. The most perfect exhibition of grace then, whether in its letter, spirit, or preaching, is afforded to the Church in the Acts and writings of the Apostles. And who, that is well conversant with these, has not felt the

¹ Col. ii. 15.

² Luke vii. 8.

sweet infusion of grace pervading all calls to duty, and that duty is made practicable from faith in his promise “ who maketh us to will and to do of his good pleasure.”¹ If *doctrines* are to be insisted on, they are recommended experimentally; whether it be the total corruption of our nature, our complete salvation by grace, our justification by faith in the blood of Christ, our sanctification, our privileges, our election in Christ, as is evident from the most logical statement of them to be found in Scripture, from the first to the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. If *duties* are to be enforced, we have not a whole chapter drawn out into scholastic niceties of detail; but we have them in the mass, as the rich combined expression of the Christian character, mixed up with Gospel motives and encouragements, the bright truths of mercy and grace, sparkling like diamonds here and there, and the loved name of Jesus sanctifying the call to duty throughout, making effort hopeful, and our sanctification our highest pleasure. This is strikingly evidenced in the conclusion of the Epistle above referred to, from the twelfth chapter to the end. If a *grace* is to be pourtrayed, a few masterly touches of characteristic excellence are given, such as that of charity,² ever grounding us on faith, and reminding us that it is charity as it is the result

¹ Phil. ii. 13.

² 1 Cor. xiii.

of the faith and hope of the Gospel. Christ is the soul of *duty*, of *grace*, of *privilege*. Christ is the light and warmth which cheer and animate to exertion. It is the promise and not the precept, it is encouragement and not exaction, it is grace, and not nature which consecrate a course of moral beauty and blessing, and convince the believer that whether grace is to be exercised, or duty discharged, he is eminently “God’s workmanship”—“the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”¹

Such also is the Gospel of our Church, as preached in “The Article”² and Liturgy. The Seventeenth Article is an exquisite and most accomplished description of the whole Gospel. It originates in the love of the Father regarding fallen man in the perfection of the Son, and applying this love in experimental efficacy to the soul of man by the agency of the Holy Ghost. “The Article” grounds all its blessings to the sinner on God’s free election of him to everlasting glory in Christ; and on this foundation applied to the individual as “endued with so excellent a benefit of God,” all the blessings of the Gospel are raised. The whole Gospel according to “The Article,” is but an illustration of God’s electing love. The calling of the sinner,

¹ Eph. iv. 24.

² See His Majesty’s Declaration prefixed to the Articles, clause the sixth.

his conversion in obedience to the call, his justification, his adoption, his sanctification, his religious walk and final glory, that is, all these particulars which constitute the Gospel (for this is the Gospel) are consecutive benefits necessarily flowing out of that original benefit;—the sinner's being marked out as the object of God's distinguishing mercy in Christ Jesus. If you detach them from their consecutive station you spoil their harmony, their beauty, and their efficacy; if you join sanctification immediately with justification, and pass over the highly privileged link of adoption, as is too commonly done in stating the Gospel, you lose the great animating motive to sanctification, this rich expression of the free favour and sovereign mercy of God. It is thus with the whole cluster of doctrines here stated as constituting the Gospel; you cannot remove one without marring the harmony of the whole. Displace but one, and you break the continuity of the stream which originates in the fountain of God's eternal election, and flows on with increasing abundance of blessings to its confluence in the ocean of everlasting glory. Electing love is here the *origin* of salvation, electing grace in all its rich variety is the *means*, electing glory is the *end*. And nothing short of this, according to this statement of our Church, is the full and real gospel of Christ Jesus. It is eminently the exhibition and application of ELECTING LOVE.

And here I am concerned to show the admirable consistency of our Church with the word of God on which she is built. There is not one of these links of blessing which is not a necessary part of electing wisdom in the process of our salvation ; so that if this doctrine be omitted in our ministry, salvation by free grace seems to lose its very spirit and soul. Our CALLING is the process of election,—“ Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”¹ Our OBEDIENCE TO THE CALL is the process of election,—“ Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.”² Our FREE JUSTIFICATION is the process of election ;—“ moreover whom he did predestinate them he also called : and whom he called, them he also justified.”³ Our ADOPTION is the process of election—“ having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.”⁴ Our SANCTIFICATION or being made like the image of his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ, is the process of election, for—“ whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his

¹ 2 Tim. i. 9.

² 1 Pet. i. 2.

³ Rom. viii. 30.

⁴ Ephes. i. 5.

Son."¹ Our RELIGIOUS WALK in good works is the process of election,—“ for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained,” or prepared, “that we should walk in them.”² Our FINAL GLORY is the desirable end in which this process of election terminates: it is the concluding link of the chain—“ whom he justified, them he also glorified.”³

The above, I conceive, to be a most lucid statement of “the Gospel of the grace of God,”⁴ according to the order of “the Article” confirmed by the word of Scripture. It is the process of God’s mercy from its origin to its consummation. It is the full and compendious developement of “all the counsel of God”⁵ in the Gospel. To preach systematically or habitually detached portions of this harmonious whole, is by omission to mar the Gospel; and to preach any particular, but as pre-supposing the grand pervading and originating doctrine of electing mercy, is to misrepresent, by not illustrating that grace of which it is only a part: it is not “the whole truth.” Certain portions may be preached, and conversion may be the effect: but that richer style of sanctification, which is itself the blessed result of all this succession of privilege, is inseparably connected with it,

¹ Rom. viii. 29.

² Eph. ii. 10.

³ Rom. viii. 30.

⁴ Acts xx. 24.

⁵ Ibid. 27.

as it is the necessary result of it. It is to restore the image of God, as presented to us in Christ, to the human soul, that all this train of mercy is provided ; and this is a preparation for glory. And as the soul grows in its apprehensions of redeeming mercy, so does it expand in love to God and man, so does sin lose its dominion, and so is grace enthroned triumphant.

The principle of this Gospel then is,—not “we love him first, and then he loves us ;” but “we love him because he first loved us :¹ not the love of man purchasing the love of God, but the love of God to us inducing our love to him. And this I apprehend is the Gospel as wrought out in all its vital detail in the Liturgy and formularies of our Church. God’s chosen people are the persons for whom it is intended. They are elected according to the promise as the children of believing Parents ; they are united in Baptism to “the Communion of the Saints” when the Church prays that they may “ever remain in the number of” God’s “faithful and elect children ;” they are taught that the Holy Ghost “sanctifieth” or is sanctifying them “and all the elect people of God ;” they are, as I have shewn in the course of these pages, continually recognized, throughout the Liturgy and its formularies, as lively members of a spiritual communion ; and in the last affect-

¹ 1 John iv. 19.

ing expression of our regard that we can afford them in this world, "we give hearty thanks" to the Father of mercies, "for that it hath pleased him to deliver this our Brother out of the miseries of this sinful world; and we add, "beseeching thee, that it may please thee of thy gracious goodness shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect and to hasten thy kingdom." All the privileges of the Gospel, as stated in "The Article," are vitally and experimentally interwoven throughout the Liturgy; so that the man who really does accompany the words of the Liturgy as they fall from the lips of the minister with corresponding feelings in his soul, enjoys the "true and lively word" of the Gospel in all its spiritual blessedness; and being a living member of Christ's mystical body "is neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."¹

Would you have all the pulpits of the Establishment then to sound forth the doctrine of election? I would answer this question by referring to the practice of the Reformers. When the Church was reduced to a low condition, they adapted their means of revival to the capability of the patient. They abated not one iota of its blessedness, in stating all the rich privileges of the Gospel, in that formulary which was to define those blessings, in as full and

¹ 2 Peter i. 8.

accurate a manner, as human language was capable of conveying them to the understanding. This they have done in the Seventeenth Article, which was to be a standing model of the privileges of the Gospel, presented as a continual memorial to the Church. The same privileges which they defined in "The Article," they so interwove throughout the whole service of the Church, that they formed the very essence of her worship. Open the Liturgy where you will, turn to whatever formulary you please, and it is a service for an elect soul ; it is the confession, prayer, intercession, praise and rejoicing of a child of God, and of a real disciple of Jesus Christ. It is a service which an unspiritual mouth may utter, but it is one which a spiritual soul can alone enjoy. Nor have the Reformers, in this respect, withheld one iota of what they deemed the truth as it is in Jesus ; they have displayed the integrity of the Gospel, the whole counsel of God, in experimental life and energy, in the letter of the Liturgy : and they have left it like the letter of Scripture to be applied individually, as each particular worshipper is endued with grace to receive it. They have acted otherwise as to the preaching of the Gospel in the Homilies.¹ There they have accommodated their statement to what the then

¹ If the institution of "The Prayer Book and Homily Society," had been productive of no other advantage than that

condition of the Church seemed to require. The Reformed Church was only in her infancy ; both ministers and people, as the Homilies and cotemporary accounts abundantly testify, were reduced to a low state both of knowledge and practice. They had recently come out of darkness into light ; and though some enjoyed that light with a vitality perhaps now unknown ; yet the great mass of the people required an initiatory instruction, by which they might be gradually led to the apprehension of the whole truth. Hence the thirty-fifth Article declares the Homilies to “ contain a godly and wholesome doctrine, and necessary for these times.” The times demanded no higher statement ; and it was prudent to give them what they could bear. The very same Homilies, and sermons of the same standard of doctrine, are equally necessary at these times. Let this statement of doctrines then be made, but only as preparatory to a fuller display of the Gospel. Let it be considered as an initiatory administration of the word, to be carried forward to perfection.¹

of introducing the Homilies to the notice both of rich and poor, this alone would have given it ample claim to the support and gratitude of our United Church.

¹ I apprehend not only from the expression “ necessary for these times ” in the Thirty-fifth Article, but also by the internal evidence afforded by the Homilies themselves, that a fuller display of the doctrines of grace was meditated when the Church should be prepared for it. The doctrine of election is by no means excluded from them, as a poison to be avoided, as it is

If we aim at nothing beyond the standard of the Homilies, I apprehend our people will never receive the Gospel in all the vital extent of privilege, in which it is defined in the Seventeenth Article, and represented in all its varied detail in the Liturgy. If as ministers of the Establishment we are "never" to "cease" our "labour," our "care and diligence, until" we "have done all that lieth in" us, "according to" our "bounden duty, to bring all such as are or shall be committed to" our "charge unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, and to

from the fashionable divinity of our day; but "the sweet savouriness" of it, is admitted occasionally into these elementary addresses as a taste of the richer statement of Gospel blessings for which they were preparing the Church, as may be seen by consulting the following Homilies:—on Prayer, part three—on the Nativity—on the Passion—on Whitsunday; and more at large, speaking of "the undoubted children of God appointed to everlasting life," the Homily of Alms-deeds, part two, continues—"And so, as by their wickedness and ungodly living, they showed themselves according to the judgment of men, which follow the outward appearance, to be reprobates and castaways; so now by their obedience unto God's holy will, and by their mercifulness and tender pity, wherein they show themselves to be like unto God, who is the fountain and spring of all mercy, they declare openly and manifestly unto the sight of men, that they are the sons of God, and elect of him unto salvation. For as the good fruit is not the cause that the tree is good, but the tree must first be good before it can bring forth good fruit; so the good deeds of man are not the cause that maketh man good, but he is first made good by the Spirit and grace of God, that effectually worketh in him and afterwards bringeth forth good fruits."

that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left among " us, " either for error in religion or for viciousness in life ; " ¹ it is quite clear that this high standard of spiritual growth can never be attained, but under the warm beams of a ministry, that insists on holiness as the highest happiness, and uniformly animates its subjects to increasing spirituality, by a constant display of free grace, and sovereign mercy, and electing love ; a ministry that draws all its motives from the love of God in Christ, and urges the soul to an imitation of his example, from the sweet peace it derives from the satisfaction of his blood, and the power of holiness that is maintained by the influence of his Spirit. That " ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ," which leaves " no place for error in religion, or viciousness in life," can only arise from the enjoyment of all the privileges to which we are entitled in Christ, even " that he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." ² I would answer the question, therefore by saying, It will be a happy day for the Church of England when all her ministers aim to give her Baptismal Service and its sister formularies their full effect, by bringing their people to " a ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ ; " when, like the Reformers, they give

¹ Ordering of Priests.

² Ephesians i. 4.

them those fundamental doctrines which are necessary for the times, with the view of leading them on to the perfection of that most accomplished Christian communion to which our Church in consistency with Scripture aims to elevate her children. “That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.”¹

Such I apprehend to be the matter and order of the real Gospel of Christ as represented in the Scripture, and by our Church in her Seventeenth Article and in her Liturgy; and I subjoin an instance of the mode in which it was both stated and preached by one of the brightest luminaries of that epoch. “Here cometh necessarily in a new way unto salvation, so that they which were in the other perverse, may in this be found straight and righteous. *That the way of nature, this the way of grace.* The end of *that* way salvation merited, pre-supposing the righteousness of men’s works—their righteousness, a natural ability to do them—that ability the goodness of God, which created them in such perfections. But the end of *this* way salvation bestowed upon men as a *gift*, pre-supposing not their righteousness, but the forgiveness of their unrighteousness, justification—their

¹ Col. ii. 2

justification not their natural ability to do good but their hearty sorrow for their not doing, and unfeigned belief in him, for whose sake not-doers are accepted, which is their vocation—their vocation, the election of God, taking them out from the number of lost children—their election a Mediator in whom to be elect, this mediation inexplicable mercy—his mercy, their misery for whom he vouchsafed to make himself a mediator. The want of exact distinguishing between these two ways, and observing what they have common, what peculiar, hath been the cause of the greatest part of that confusion whereof Christianity at this day laboureth.” This masterly statement extracted from his “Learned sermon on the nature of pride,” Hooker insists on throughout his sermons in a less formal and didactic manner. But this was the Gospel of the Reformation; and it is, I apprehend, the preaching of this Gospel, in its real extent and spirit, that can alone make our Baptismal Service intelligible or acceptable. Let salvation be of grace from beginning to end, and it will be seen, that the faith which begins in the promise, is maintained by the promise, and is crowned by the promise, shall never fail of holiness here or of full salvation hereafter. Such is the real condition, and practical blessedness of a soul introduced and educated according to the Baptismal privileges of our Church: it is the

Gospel in vigorous exercise, mercy preparing a soul for glory.

It is surely one of the master-strokes of policy in our great enemy the devil, to draw off our attention from the plain and simple Gospel of grace as presented to us in the Seventeenth Article and Liturgy of our Church, and to place before us some other standard. He distracts that he may confound; and divides that he may destroy. For more than two centuries, the devil has employed the Church of England in fighting for a shadow, for the very purpose of distracting her attention from the simple truth. The names of two men, as heads of opposing parties, have occupied those lips and pens, which should have been engaged in setting forth, not the Gospel of Calvin or Arminius, but the plain letter of the Gospel of our Church, as expressed in her Seventeenth Article. What have you and I, My Dear Friend, as Clergyzaen of the Church of England, to do with Calvin or Arminius? We have not subscribed the tenets of either of these men, as the standard of the Gospel, but those of the Seventeenth Article of our Church. Let both of them have the respect which may be their due; and as an individual, I may prefer the divinity of the Pastor of Geneva, to that of the Professor of Leyden, or the contrary. But I cannot defend the sentiments of either the one or the other, as

though such sentiments were identified with the Gospel of the Church of England. I account this to be one of the devil's chief artifices to draw us off from the real Gospel as held by our Church. Our Gospel is neither that of Calvin¹ nor Arminius : it stands without names as the Gospel of the Reformation—majestic in its own Scriptural simplicity. May God of his infinite mercy have pity on our distracted state, and cure us of this folly ; may he open our eyes to this artifice of Satan ; may every pulpit sound with the plain letter of “The Article ;” may “all² farther curious search be laid aside, and these disputes shut up in God’s promises, as they be generally set forth to us in the Holy Scriptures, and the general meaning of the Articles of the Church of England, according to them.” All I desire is, that “no man hereafter shall either print or preach, to draw THE ARTICLE

¹ There are few persons in history to whom their contemporaries have done more ample justice than Calvin ; and there are few from whose labours posterity might have received greater advantages, while it has perverted his name to father the grossest enormities in sentiment and practice ; and visited on him the consequences of these perversions for which he is by no means responsible. I believe there are few at the present day, who will read Calvin for themselves, that will not be astonished at the difference, between the real person and the portrait which prejudice has drawn of him. I have heard it remarked, after such a perusal, that Calvin himself was a poor Calvinist.

² See His Majesty’s Declaration prefixed to the Articles.

aside *any way*; but shall submit to it in the plain and full meaning thereof." Let every minister of the Church but preach the plain letter of THE ARTICLE, (that is the Seventeenth) and give it its "literal and grammatical sense;" and I have no fear for the spread of the real Gospel. He may call himself by whatever name he pleases, and men may call him by the same: only let him "give the sense" of the letter as Ezra and his brother expositors did, and I have no fear for the result. But alas! the letter is banished from among us, men's names are substituted for it, and if we withhold the letter how can we "give the sense?"¹

And as the above is the *tone* of Gospel preaching, which, I conceive can alone originate and maintain that "Communion of Saints," which our Church contemplates in the above interpretation of her Baptismal Service, I may perhaps be permitted to state also, the corresponding *manner* in which I conceive that Gospel should be preached.

First as to its *letter*.—I do not see how we can preach the *tone* of the Gospel but in the *letter* of the Gospel. The fashion of sinking the expression of Scripture, and of clothing Scripture sense, if it can be so clothed, in a preferable phraseology, is surely, at once, to dishonour God, and to wrong man of his due. It is said,

¹ Neh. viii. 8.

this expression is too strong, this is unnecessarily offensive, and this is intolerable. But are we wiser than God, who, in revealing his truth, has selected each respective term as the most appropriate vehicle of conveying “the mind of the Spirit ?”¹ or are we more kindly condescending to human infirmity than God, who, had he chosen it, could have selected terms less offensive to human pride than he has done ? If *reformation* is to be substituted for *regeneration*, and if *adoption* and *election* are to be utterly banished from the language of the pulpit, it is but too evident that with the name we shall soon lose the thing ; for names are the signs of things, and if you merge the one, experience too evidently proves that you merge the other also. I cannot but think that it is this fashion, even in the Evangelical world, which has been one powerful means both of generating and encouraging a morbid fastidiousness as to pulpit expression, by which not only has the pure doctrine of grace been deteriorated, but the soul of the sinner perishing in his sins, and of the saint drooping under his infirmities, has been equally wronged of those sweet motives which might have “compelled” the one “to come in” and to repent, and have freed the other from the darkness of doubt, and sent him on his way rejoicing.

¹ Rom. viii. 27.

Nor here is it foreign from our purpose to remark on the fashionable theological phraseology of our day. Instead of the vernacular language of our times we have substituted that of our forefathers of the Reformation, and retained their *hath* instead of *has*, with a too rigid adherence to the terminations *ed* and *eth* of our verbs, as though we were addressing men in the language of the days of Elizabeth. We have retained a language which is now obsolete in common parlance, and which is offensive to every cultivated ear ; so that if we were to address any one in this dialect on any of the ordinary topics of life, they could scarcely refrain from shewing their surprise by a smile. Lord Bacon reckons among “the diseases of learning,” “a fondness for the obsolete ;” and surely it is as offensive to sound knowledge as it is to just taste and pure simplicity. Our Reformers wrote in “the vulgar tongue :” they adopted the common language of their day : they did not apply to Chaucer for expressions which were then obsolete ; nor did they imitate their contemporary Spenser, in affecting an antiquated phraseology : they used the words that were best “understood of the people,”¹ and which expressed the every-day ideas and commerce of life. And how studiously they excluded what was unlike “the vulgar tongue,” may be seen

¹ Article XXXV.

by any one, who will take the pains to compare the first and second edition of the First Book of the Homilies together. But with their simple sense of Scripture we have lost their simplicity of style ; for what was simplicity in their day is affectation in ours ; and religious truth offered to the people in a language spoken three hundred years since, is like a modern Englishman drest out in the “ prodigal hose ” of the Court of Elizabeth. The subject of Christianity is sufficiently offensive to the general mind, to call upon us to forbear all unnecessary ground of offence. Blessed be God, Christianity knows no Sanscrit, it has not one language in which to express ideas of heaven, and another to express those of earth : it would that all its blessed truths should be subjects of common language, as it would have them to be subjects of common intelligence and common feeling. It would not have one manner of speech for the pulpit, and another for the Change ; but that the language of the pulpit should convey the ideas of the pulpit in the language of the parlour and the kitchen, the court and the cottage, the parliament, the bar, the counting-house, the warehouse, the field, the camp, the ship, that wherever man—immortal man is to be found, all his pursuits may be sanctified, and he may think, and speak, and work upon earth, with one prevailing view to his immortal interests, that he is a child of God, in whose

name all engagements are to be undertaken, to whose glory he is to direct them, and in whose blessing he is to expect success. If I comprehend what Christianity means, it is to sanctify man in all his pursuits here, to prepare him for a happy immortality hereafter. But if we throw religion into a mist, we exclude it from common view, and so far remove it from the capability of mixing up with the concerns of ordinary life ; and this is to deprive it of its peculiar blessedness, which is even on earth to enable man “ to walk with God.” If like the sword of Goliath laid up in the sanctuary, Christianity is only to be displayed to our admiration on feast-days and holidays, let it be wrapt up in a language of its own ; but if, like the same sword taken from its resting-place, and found in the hand of David, Christianity is to be a ready weapon in the hand of the man of God, applicable to every purpose of offence or defence in his spiritual course, let its vehicle be the common language of mankind, that it may be applicable to common feelings and common wants. If religion consists in “ setting the Lord always before us,”¹ surely the expression of it cannot be too vernacular.

But you will perhaps say, would you have the Liturgy submitted to this modernizing process ? I reply that in the public use of the Liturgy, as a minister of our Church, I do not conceive

¹ Psalm xvi. 8.

myself authorized to change one word for another. I have no authority to exchange *which* for *who*, or *hath* for *has*; and if this liberty were once permitted to the discretion of a minister, it is not difficult to see, that it might lead to the total depravation of both Liturgy and Scripture. All I claim at present is, to pronounce according to the fashion of the day in which we live, and, that if in reading a modern volume, I should pronounce, “we have err’d and stray’d from thy ways like lost sheep,” I should use the same pronunciation in reading the Bible or the Liturgy. And if you should ask again, would you have our Liturgy and Bible modernized throughout in their phraseology; I reply that common sense requires that they should speak in common language, if they would address the common feelings of mankind. But we are necessarily led, I think, to this conclusion on the subject, that desirable as it might be, to present Christianity both to the eye and ear of the people, in its most familiar and intelligible dress, yet that as the Reformers do not live in these times,¹ it is

¹ I use these words with no invidious reference to the present times; for where during the whole space of time from the first introduction of Christianity into this Island to the present hour, do we find such a six years as those which formed the reign of Edward the Sixth. It was surely a peculiarly favorable opportunity of Reformation appointed by the providence of the Great Head of the Church, for the especial establishment of pure Christianity in this land. The condition and disposition of the chief civil Magistrate were peculiar, the spiritual

far more prudent to retain our present blessing's untouched, than by attempting the improvement of them, to risk their diminution or their loss. But this remark does not apply to modernizing our pronunciation.

To the above I would yet add one or two remarks as to the *manner* of preaching the Gospel. I do not see how it is possible either for the minister to give, or the people to receive, a sound and full representation of the Gospel from the present mode of preaching. *Topical* preaching, or preaching from texts and detached small portions, containing one or more propositions taken out of their context, and presented nakedly and solitarily to the mind, never can convey either the spirit or the meaning of the continuous and uninterrupted letter. Apply this mode of exposition to Butler or Locke, and would the schools be satisfied that these topical

agents were peculiar for hardihood, piety, station, and both intellectual and spiritual acquirement; the season was peculiar also. Can we fix on any other term of six years, when such a body of Articles would have been drawn up, and sound Reformation would have been so prudently advanced? May our day be a day of similar improvement.

The difference between the Divines of 1555 and those of 1655 is striking. The one wrote in their closets, and are full of thought—dry, accurate, disquisitive, and scholastic; the other wrote with the stake before their eyes, full of holy feeling;—racy, popular, experimental, and spiritual. Though some exceptions might be mentioned, the above seems to me to be the characteristic difference.

hints had conveyed to them the full sense of their authors. How is it possible then, that from one or two detached propositions from the Bible, given to the people one day in seven, the knowledge of the Gospel, as it is variously illustrated in the very copious page of the Holy Volume, should in any intelligible degree be presented to our Congregations? With the best intentions of the minister, and the most able and most sedulous conduct of his ministry, the Bible thus offered to the people in disjointed and unconnected portions, must leave them very inadequate judges of its contents: not to say that the spirit of the sacred, as well as of every other text, must very considerably evaporate by this interruption of the letter. It may be that partial views of Scripture first originated this topical manner of treating the sacred text; assuredly partial views of the Gospel must be maintained and established by it. What man first approaches the Bible, as an ordained expositor of its truths to a Congregation, that has not acquired from books, or education, or society, some preconceived notions of his own? And however honest his mind may be, he himself may be unaware, with how certain tendency that mind will be led to select those texts which suit its own pre-conceived ideas. And when to this failing of nature we add the wasting influence of party-spirit, and consider how long the Christian world has been split into parties, and

that the mischief has attained such a height, that we hear of Arminian texts and Calvinistic texts,—it is scarcely possible to hope, that the whole truth of Scripture, the precept and the promise, the privilege and the practice, will be preached with that integrity, which the truth demands, and which can give effect to the above interpretation of Baptismal blessings. It is by the continuous exposition of an Epistle, or an integral portion of Scripture that the whole “mind of the Spirit” can be presented to the people. On a particular occasion let an appropriate text be selected; but let the ordinary course of the ministry consist of the well-known portion continually offered to the Church, till the whole counsel of God in that portion is delivered to the people in all its uninterrupted spirit and meaning. The minister must then attach some sense to the words as they were submitted to consideration in their place and course; it might be an imperfect sense, it might be a partial sense given in a hurried and unequal manner; but it must be some sense; and the people would at least hear the doctrines and precepts of the whole word, at least in the letter and connexion, as it has pleased God to reveal it to man. This would be the most unfavorable view of the subject. But if indeed “a godly-learned” ministry were to adopt this course, whose laborious perseverance would call together the “Communion of the

Saints" daily to prayer in the Church, as our Liturgy provides and expects; and if a short exposition of Scripture were to crown the service, given, not with preconceived pomp of diction, but the sweet simplicity of familiar intercourse, even as a father teaches his own children, the speaker illustrating the blessed truths as they arose, from his own or his people's experience of their vital efficacy in affording consolation and peace; what a "lively word" would the Scripture then be! how intelligible its truths! how applicable to every man's circumstances and character! how available, by the blessing of the Spirit, to infuse the spirit of Christianity into all the commerce of life! The Bible being thus given in all the continuous integrity of its letter, the Holy Spirit, in answer to prayer, would doubtless honour his own word; and such a "Communion of Saints" would be created and maintained, as would present the Church to the admiration and love of the world; and would again incur the old reproach—"See how these Christians love one another," from obdurate worldliness, or would realise the encouraging promise of general unity and concurrence; "Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also."¹

But you will say, in addition to great zeal in

¹ Zech. viii. 21.

the minister, this mode of preaching implies a facility of extemporaneous address in him also. It certainly does ; and I must profess my utter inability to conceive the attainment of this blessed state of constant communion without it. Ever since the reading of Homilies has been discontinued, and written sermons have been habitually introduced, the preaching of the word has been restrained in our Church. Homilies were never intended but as temporary aids for an incompetent ministry,¹ to be laid aside when “these times” which may require such pre-composed forms may be superseded by others of greater ministerial efficiency : and written sermons composed *ad unguem* to suit a fastidious taste, which every minister of the Gospel should, as the bane and plague of his ministry, endeavour rather to correct than to gratify, take up far too much of a minister’s time, and exhaust far too much of his spirit, to enable him to engage, with any hope of permanency, in such a ministry as that recommended above. And is such a ministry to be despised of because this leading qualification is unattainable ? So long as it is the fashion to cry down and disown the best exercise of one of God’s best gifts to man ; and so long as the exercise of this talent is branded with the charge of presumption

¹ See Arch-bishop Grindal’s letter to Queen Elizabeth either in Fuller or Strype.

and enthusiasm, and as almost worse than heresy itself, and is considered as synonymous with dissent, and is the subject of authoritative displeasure,—the prevailing fashion of a day may deem it to be unattainable. But allow me at least to attempt to shew, that both the dictates of sound sense, and the best experience, together with the facilities afforded by our admirable Baptismal education, conducted as our Church directs, upon the principles of the above interpretation, combine to prove, that extemporaneous expression in the pulpit is not an excellence of so difficult a character, that its general attainment is wholly to be despaired of.

Upon what principle of common sense then can it be shewn that the exercise of one of God's best gifts to man, the power of speech, which enables him to express his ideas with extemporaneous facility, should be excluded from the highest possible office in which that gift can glorify its Giver,—the preaching of the Gospel of mercy to apostate man. Is the tongue of man spell-bound at this day, upon those heavenly subjects, on which David in his day challenged "the best member that"¹ he had, "awake up my glory;"² and in which when he said, "my heart is glad," he said also, "my glory [my tongue] rejoiceth?"³ Senators can express themselves fluently in the legislature, statesmen in the cabinet, lawyers on

¹ Psalm cviii. 1.

² Ibid. lvii. 8.

³ Ibid. xvi. 9.

the bench or at the bar, physicians in a sick room, and all men of all trades and occupations, can deliver their ideas with sufficient fluency on the ordinary topics of human intercourse. Let the labourer in the field have a common idea to express, and he is not usually at a loss for terms in which to convey it; the same may be said probably of the most uncivilized savage in existence. Till it can be proved then that God, either in nature, or providence, has imposed on the tongue some obstacle to ready religious expression, or has forbidden the use of its extemporaneous exercise by some positive precept in his word, I must take it for granted that the tongue, especially if disciplined to the same, is at least as free and as able to exercise its powers extemporaneously on the subject of religion, as on any other subject which occupies the attention of man.

Experience seems also to commend extemporaneous expression in the pulpit. Can you conceive Ignatius, or Polycarp, or Clement of Rome addressing the primitive communions of the saints in precomposed forms of speech? These Apostolic men doubtless endeavoured to retain Apostolic simplicity in the Church by the most simple and natural address of extemporaneous familiarity. Their age of gold was soon succeeded by an iron age of preconceived composition, till the heathen taste of the day, as it is at present, gradually superseded that of

genuine simplicity, and the false eloquence of undue refinement, that eloquence which the great Apostle avoided as the bane of Gospel simplicity, found its way into the pulpit, and the prevalence of a declining taste kept pace with that of a declining empire, till plain sense was lost in the confusion of gaudy metaphor, and, with her purity of speech, Christianity lost her purity of meaning also. This decline, produced by undue concession to the false taste of the world, speedily terminated, as it ever must do, either in a total perversion of the original purpose of the pulpit, or in the complete disuse of its powers. Lying legends occupied its sacred functions, or it was reduced to total silence: and the preached Gospel being suspended, a long night of ignorance and error overspread the Church. Thus sin reigned triumphant, intrenched in imposing circumstantial, till at the Reformation, with purity of principle, purity of preaching arose also. The Augustine Monk, with a heart full of holy zeal, could only give vent to this zeal by its most natural mode, extemporaneous expression. This was the necessary habit of the early Reformers; like the ardent Prophet, the “word” of God “was in” their “heart as a burning fire shut up in” their “bones;” and “they were” weary with forbearing, and “could not stay.”¹

¹ Jer. xx. 9.

The written works of our original Reformers are but comparatively few ; and those, in a great measure, composed during their confinement in prison, when their active ministry was suspended. Bradford preached daily in his prison to his fellow-prisoners ; Latimer preached over the country ;¹ and how could Hooper have superintended his two dioceses of Gloucester and Worcester, or have thought that no Bishop could complain at preaching one sermon a day, had he not adopted the habit of extemporaneous preaching ?² Such was doubtless the custom

¹ The account given of his preaching in his life prefixed to the edition of his sermons, in 2 vols. 8vo. 1758, is as follows : “ He spoke with great freedom : and it not then being the custom for the clergy to write down their sermons, and read them as they do now, to the people, what he spoke on a subject was full of sincerity, and flowed immediately and directly from the heart. All which the reader will find to be truth, from the perusal of his sermons, particularly those preached before King Edward VI.”

“ 1553. On the sixth of July King Edward died. At which time master Latimer was in the country preaching here and there as opportunity and occasion led him, going about, in imitation of the Apostles, strengthening the people every where in the protestant faith and principles.” pp. 50, 32.

² Hooper is recommended by Edward the Sixth to Cranmer’s gracious consideration for consecration to the See of Gloucester among other qualifications for his “ ready utterance ; ” and Fox tells us that he, “ being Bishop of two dioceses, so ruled and guided either of them, and both together, as though he had in charge but one family. No father in his household, no gardener in his garden, nor husbandman in his vineyard, was

of the leading ministers of that day; ¹ and as the spirit of the Reformation declined, how evi-

more or better occupied, than he in his diocese amongst his flock, going about his towns and villages in teaching and preaching to the people there." Fathers, v. 16.

¹ I find the following notices on this subject.

Clarke in his life of Collet, Dean of St. Paul's, states, that Fitz-James, his Bishop, complained of him to Archbishop Warham, among other things "for speaking against such as preached bosom sermons, declaring nothing to the people but what they bring in their papers with them : this the Bishop of London used to do, and therefore took it as spoken against himself, which much irritated him against Dr. Collet."

Holingshed says of Horne, Bishop of Winchester, " This man was learned and eloquent, of a round and ready utterance, sound in religion and zealous in the truth." p. 1300.

He says also of Jewell that he was " in his life a most eloquent and diligent preacher." p. 1226.

Of Coverdale, Bishop of Exeter, he says, " He preached continuallie upon every holie daie, and did reade most commonlie twice in the weeke, in some one church or other within this citie." p. 1309.

Of Coverdale's first Protestant successor, Alleie, he says, " Upon everie holie daie (for the most part) he preached, and upon the weeke daies he would and did reade a lecture of divinitie." p. 1310.

A difference is made in the two extracts above between preaching and reading, the latter was probably a more familiar and expository kind of address, and of a more extemporaneous character.

This extemporaneous readiness of speaking was cast in the teeth of the Reformers also by their enemies as a reproach. Gardiner says to Sanders on his examination, " Give us forthwith a direct answer."

dently do we mark that decline in the dry head-work of formal compositions, accurate enough in their statements, but destitute of spiritual life, and wearying the attention by ceaseless divisions and subdivisions. Nor did extemporaneous preaching cease in our Church, as Archbishop Usher's¹ eighteen sermons preached at Oxford, during the Irish troubles, when he was driven from his country, seem to testify ; till this instance of bad taste came in, with many others,

“ *Sanders.* My Lord, and my Lords all, may it please your Honours to give me leave to answer with deliberation.

Chancellor. Leave off your painting and pride of speech : for such is the fashion of you all, to please yourselves in your glorious words. Answer yea, or nay.” Fox iii. 113.

Indeed the examinations of the Martyrs, detailed by Fox, shew them to have been men well prepared both with matter and expression.

With declining doctrine, ministerial zeal also declined, and with declining zeal extemporaneous expression in the pulpit seems to have declined also ; till in Bishop Hall's time, this custom being branded probably with the charge of Puritanism, it seems to have yielded either to pulpit addresses repeated from memory, or to written compositions ; and surely neither the sermons of Bishop Hall, which are extant, nor those of his co-temporaries, abounding indeed in matter, but stiff and formal in their phraseology and arrangement, impress us with the idea that the Church was benefitted by this altered style of address.

¹ I am not aware that the Editors who “ wrote all these words at his mouth ” as he was preaching, and afterwards published them, expressly state this ; but the familiar mode of expression, and many terms peculiarly his own, which have all the air of extemporaneous address seem to denote it.

in the days of confusion and relaxation which succeeded : nor did it cease even then without a solemn expostulation with the Cambridge Clergy of that day, for omitting that habit which was at least the semblance of a better, the habit of reciting their sermons from memory.¹ And what was the consequence ? another night of semi-papistical ignorance and error prevailed over the land for nearly another century, till two eminent lights arose out of our Established

¹ MANDATE OF KING CHARLES THE SECOND.

Vice Chancellor and Gentlemen,

Whereas his Majesty is informed that the practice of *reading* sermons is generally taken up by the Preachers before the University and therefore sometimes continued even before himself : his Majesty hath commanded me to signify to you his pleasure that the said practice which took its beginning from the disorders of the late times be wholly laid aside : and that the said Preachers deliver their sermons, both in Latin and English, by memory without book : as being a way of preaching which his Majesty judgeth most agreeable to the use of all foreign Churches, to the *customs of the University* heretofore, and to the nature and intention of that holy exercise. And that his Majesty's commands in these premises may be duly regarded and observed ; his further pleasure is that the names of all such Ecclesiastical persons as shall continue the present *supine* and sloathful way of preaching be from time to time signified to me by the Vice Chancellor for the time, on pain of his Majesty's displeasure.

MONMOUTH.

Extracted from the Statute Book of the University of Cambridge, page 301. Car. II. Rex.

Buchanan's Sermons, page 66.

Church, whose course, though eccentric and disorderly, was accompanied by a burning zeal, to which extemporaneous expression could alone give utterance. And does not this day of improvement, to which their exertions have under God given birth, prove, that extemporaneous expression is generally attainable? by whom are the thousands and tens of thousands that are the sinews of various charitable efforts annually raised, and the interest of those efforts maintained, but by both Clergy and Laity, who at each anniversary advocate the cause of charity with extemporaneous zeal? Never has the Church of England, I believe, stood in higher credit with the people, never has Christianity, as professed by all denominations, been presented to them with greater acceptance, than in these annual calls of the public mind to the great subject of charity. And I believe I may add without fear of contradiction, that never have the Clergy of the Church of England been received with greater respect by those who dissent from them in discipline, than on those occasions when extemporaneous addresses have evidenced their ability, their piety, and their zeal. I think then, that I am not assuming too much, when I conclude, that *experience* both past and present, is favorable to the extemporaneous expression of religious truth.

And what admirable facilities to a Parent and a Child who will act consistently with the

requisitions of our Baptismal Service, does the education recommended by that Service afford for the attainment of ready expression ! “ The INFANT ” is to “ be taught so soon as he is able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise, and profession.” he made by his Sponsors in his Baptism. To improve this knowledge he is to be called on “ to hear sermons.” Let him be familiarly questioned as to what he has heard ; and this not as a task but a subject of conversation : let him not for many years be asked to write down what he retains, lest the toil and the difficulty turn hearing into disgust ; but let it be a privilege for the Child to be addressed by the Parent on the subject. His answers will be the embryos of future extemporaneous expression. The first link is *attention*, the second *thought*, the third *expression*. If you have not attained the first, the attainment of the two others is hopeless. Familiarity and kindness must engage attention ; and the Gospel motive of love be called into ready and continual exercise ; and let brevity be especially attended to. It is provided also, that he may learn the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Ten Commandments “ in the vulgar tongue.” Let these admirable formularies, be not only imprinted on the memory, but repeated in a familiar and intelligible manner, as though the Child were familiarly conversing in the vulgar tongue, or in the plain common manner of speaking ; this is the only

mode that I have ever found effectual to break monotonous tone, and to correct the almost constant whine of early childhood. These three presenting respectively all that is to be *believed*, all that is to be *done*, and all that is to be *prayed for*, are in fact a compendium of the Bible, and of all sound divinity ; and appear to me to be better taught at meals or at any other time in the way of conversation than in a way of set lessons, and periodical recitation ; both as the attention is more easily gained, and as the Child is unconsciously obtaining correctness of expression with increase and correctness of knowledge. And as the address to the Sponsors enjoins, let the whole education proceed upon this one grand object, "the soul's health," and with knowledge imparted, there will also be an expanding of all the faculties, and a gradual improvement of all their powers, of which the power of correct and ready expression, if attended to, will be a partaker, in common with the rest. If the Child be treated merely as a play-thing, a creature merely to be joked with, his powers will be stunted, and as the aim to which they are directed is low, their progress towards useful expansion will be proportionably slow. Treat him as a being of immortal destinies, whose "soul's health" is the great end of his education, and with the grandeur of the aim, every faculty will be found to bear a corresponding direction and improvement. To effect this, as

early as his opening powers may permit, let Watts's Hymns be gradually taught him *viva voce*, and let plain and simple pronunciation be early obtained. Let the infantine whine be corrected, by teaching him to pronounce, not according to the verse but according to the sense. As years increase, let him be called on to detail in his own words the parable of the Samaritan, or some fable or historic fact with which he is acquainted : this will be a pleasing exercise of the powers both of his mind and lips. Let him be kindly stopped at sentences imperfectly expressed (and a child will sometimes make three efforts to begin before he succeeds) and told to make another effort, for that he has not expressed himself correctly because he has not thought correctly. And if the Parent be weary of this pleasing exercise of his influence, let him either propose a subject himself, or permit his children to propose one, and leave them to their own conversation, occasionally interfering with kindness to correct what may be amiss. To this may be added, as one of the most powerful means of ready expression, extemporaneous prayer ; in which the Child may very soon begin to convey his confessions, and petitions, and praises to the throne of his heavenly Father. This mode has a vast advantage as it realises religion to the Child, calls upon him to consider his wants, the privilege of prayer which he enjoys as "a

member of Christ, and the child of God," exhibits God as a merciful Father ever ready to attend to his infant lisplings, and who regards with kindness both his imperfect words and imperfect desires. The pious and sagacious Parent who will daily himself superintend this most engaging exercise of his children's opening faculties, may hope to derive a rich reward from the gradual increase of their gracious apprehensions, as well as the improvement of their natural powers ; and if the knowledge of Scripture, (the Scripture letter, not as taught in secondary representations of it,) accompany this exercise of prayer, the Parent will be often struck, at the Child's happy facility of applying the Scripture expression to his wants, and the extemporaneous readiness with which he will offer his petitions.¹

¹ I gladly avail myself of the following remarks of Locke, which seem to me to abound in solid and practical wisdom.—“ Perhaps it might not be amiss, to make children, as soon as they are capable of it, often to tell a story of any thing they know ; and to correct at first the most remarkable fault they are guilty of in their way of putting it together. When that fault is cured, then to show them the next, and so on, till one after another, all, at least the gross ones, are mended. When they can tell tales pretty well, then it may be time to make them write them.”—

“ When they understand how to write English with due connection, propriety, and order, and are pretty well masters of a tolerable narrative style, they may be advanced to writing of letters.”—

The Child, thus introduced to his Gospel privileges, will value them more and more daily ; and I do not see, but, with ordinary diligence, by fifteen or sixteen years of age, he may have

“ Had the methods of education been directed to their right ends, one would have thought this so necessary a part could not have been neglected, whilst themes and verses in Latin, of no use at all, were so constantly every where pressed, to the racking of children’s inventions beyond their strength, and hindering their cheerful progress in learning the tongues, by unnatural difficulties. But custom has so ordained it, and who dares disobey ? and would it not be very unreasonable to require of a learned country school-master (who has all the tropes and figures in “ Farnaby’s Rhetorick,” at his fingers’ ends,) to teach his scholar to express himself handsomely in English, when it appears to be so little his business or thought, that the boy’s mother (despised, ‘tis like, as illiterate for not having read a system of logic and rhetoric,) out-does him in it ?”—

“ To speak or write better Latin than English, may make a man be talked of, but he would find it more to his purpose to express himself well in his own tongue, that he uses every moment, than to have the vain commendation of others for a very insignificant quality. This I find universally neglected, and no care taken any where to improve young men in their own language, that they may thoroughly understand and be masters of it.—

“ I am not here speaking against Greek and Latin ; I think they ought to be studied, and the Latin at least understood well by every gentleman. But whatever foreign languages a young man meddles with, (and the more he knows the better,) that which he should critically study, and labour to get a facility, clearness, and elegancy to express himself in, should be his own ; and to this purpose he should daily be exercised in it.”—“ Some thoughts concerning education.” pp. 340—346.

got by heart the whole, or nearly the whole of the New Testament, together with many of the most striking chapters of the Old. A large portion of the Scriptures is commonly acquired by a diligent Sunday School boy, and why is not every child brought up with a view “to his soul’s health,” to be admitted to the same privilege ?¹ And if he is in that rank of life, that he is intended to receive a liberal education, let facility of expression be one main point attended to in all his exercises. For this purpose let the plan of double translation, recommended by Ascham, and so happily illustrated by him in

¹ I look back with real regret on that expenditure of useful talent which distinguished some of my school-companions, and by which, after long and severe application, they were enabled to say by heart a book of Homer or Virgil at a lesson, and that often morning and evening for the space of one week in the year. To how much better purpose had such talent been applied, as well as that of their school-fellows, had the New Testament in the original, or select portions of the Old, been the subject of their attainments ! How admirable a help had this been to them in their ministry, to which many of them have been called ! The experience of one of the chief of our Reformers commends this study. “ In thy orchards, (says Ridley in his farewell to Pembroke Hall out of prison) I learned without books, almost all Paul’s Epistles, yea, and I ween, all the Canonical Epistles, save only the Apocalypse. Of which study, although in time a great part did depart from me, yet the sweet smell thereof I trust I shall convey with me into heaven : for the profit thereof I think I have felt in all my life-time ever after.”—Fathers, &c. iv. 45, 46.—Why should not this be a main object at all classical schools ?

his education of Queen Elizabeth, be introduced generally into our schools as a daily work : children will not then be learning words but idiom ; and with correct idiom in the learned languages, they will at the same time be acquiring the correct idiom of their own. And after they have construed their lessons word for word, let them read over the whole continuously into English. This is an interesting exercise ; and will at once give both correctness and facility of expression. And as to write well is commonly the great preparatory to speaking well, let English composition be quite as much attended to as that of Latin ; and surely, English prose, which the boy will be wanting every day of his life, may well occupy a large portion of that attention, which is now given to Latin poetry, which he may never think of again after his education is completed. Let him be taught to speak and not to *spout* ; the one is natural, the other unnatural : let all display be cautiously avoided ; let no declamation,¹ no public recita-

¹ I consider *declamation* as the true and legitimate child of heathenism. It is excessive and extravagant both in its matter and expression. By the confession of a heathen himself, it is suited to please the raw and easily captivated age of boyhood. And so long as it is inculcated on our youth as a just and approved style of oratory, it is in vain to look for simplicity either in parliament, the bar, or the pulpit.

The great object of a pulpit address is effect :—to convince the understanding and to influence the heart. This effect is the

tion, be permitted ; by such exhibitions more is lost by simplicity than is gained by confidence : and let the whole progress of his attainments be accompanied with the never-failing suggestions, that usefulness is the great end of them all, that they shall all perish in the using, that the truth as it is in Jesus is alone immortal, and that language and all the science that language conveys, is chiefly desirable not for itself, but as it tends to promote every blessing which makes man happy here, and prepares him for heaven hereafter.

With this prevailing reference to the welfare of the soul, as insisted on in Baptism, how excellently furnished would our youth go forth to all the various conditions and relations of life ! Their faculties thus trained would bless every

child of sympathy, and sympathy is the child of nature. When *conference* supersedes *declamation* at our schools and colleges, we may hope for a simple style in the pulpit. If a subject were given before-hand, and a class seated round their Tutor, delivering their sentiments on it simply and naturally ; the Tutor correcting both sentiment and expression, as occasion might require ; I know no one lesson now given, that if well conducted, would so prepare the man for usefulness as this. It is in fact the crown of all other lessons ; for every subject might thus be recapitulated, and the mind confirmed in its accurate apprehension of it, while the tongue was accustomed to express it. It is well worth consideration, whether our present mode of instruction is not addressed more to the memory than the mind : the memory may retain the idea generally ; but the mind must view it in every shape, and turn
- and over again, to make it its own.

station, whether it were the throne, the cabinet, the legislature, the bar, the sick-chamber, commerce, trade, and every occupation to which they might be called. Thus educated, if they were "put into the ministry,"¹ they would be already half-formed for the pulpit : and the candidate for ordination, having passed through the preparatory steps, might be trained, for one or two years, under a laborious minister of decided piety and prudence, with an especial view to attain ministerial habits and qualifications. One of these should be daily extemporaneous exposition, first in private with the Tutor alone, and then as the facility of expression increases, with the family circle. To these exercises of his extemporaneous address, might be added other opportunities in the cottages of the poor, or in the chambers of the sick ; one of the most difficult, and at the same time most important opportunities of extemporaneous usefulness to which a minister can be called. It is one for which there may be a prescript form of prayer ; but which, from the ever-fluctuating state of human character can only admit of a very general prescript form of address : indeed, the Service, while it points out the leading subjects of address to the sick, leaves the expression of those subjects in good part to the discretion of the minister. Thus exercised, his attainments,

¹ 1 Tim. i. 12.

when admitted to Orders, will receive daily confirmation and growth from the ordinary employment of his powers; and while in the early time of his ministry he will be acquiring correctness, both of thought and expression, by the composition of one written sermon in the week, his facilities of extemporaneous address will be increasing, by filling up other occasions of preaching with expositions of the Scriptures; those expositions having been preceded by the necessary study and prayer.

But, with all this preparation, there are two other points especially to be insisted on, to form the accomplished extemporaneous preacher. The first is—**THE SUBJECT.**

REM, **R**EM, **R**EM—**THE SUBJECT, THE SUBJECT, THE SUBJECT;** and that, **CHRIST CRUCIFIED**, as the only power of God unto salvation, he must be continually reminded of, as the unceasing topic of his ministry. His person, his offices, his work of complete salvation, himself the depository of all spiritual power,¹ “the author,” upholder, “finisher of our faith,”² the uniting medium between God and man, the source of all grace, whether of electing, calling, justifying, adopting, sanctifying or glorifying, must be the prominent subject of his pulpit addresses. And if he preaches continuously on some integral portion of Scripture, it will force itself on his notice,

¹ John xvi. 14, 15.

² Heb. xii. 2.

that the whole Scripture is a revelation of Christ. Graces, duties, and privileges, will all find their proper place, and all receive their appropriate mention, as Christ crucified is perseveringly insisted on. Let the preacher's soul be filled with this subject, and there will be a warmth and animation within, that, with God's blessing, will find its way, by a simple expression to the souls of those he addresses. And it has been the result of my observation of different preachers, that the men who held the most simple views of Christ, as the source of all grace, have been the men, who have spoken of him with the readiest facility, and have recommended him with the sweetest paternal simplicity to the acceptance of their people.

And the reason is evident : for where Christ is, there is love ; love in the heart, love in the manner, love in the voice, love in the whole ministry of the word. And love has ever two choice sisters by her side, HUMILITY, and SIMPLICITY. Let love be in every minister's heart, and he will not, in spirit, be elevated above his people in a pulpit of privilege ; but HUMILITY will bring him down to the same level with them as fellow-sinners before one common Father's throne ; and SIMPLICITY, in the sweetest tones of affectionate appeal, will solicit, and entreat, and beseech them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God.

The other requisite to form the accomplished

extemporaneous preacher is—**FAITH.** Faith in the peculiar promises made by Christ to his ministers. Not only faith in the general promise—“ Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,”¹ but also in his particular promise to give them “a mouth and wisdom.”² It is surely inconsistent in the man who derives his ministerial appointment from the Apostles, to forego his claim to their most blessed privilege, the continual aid of the Spirit in the most engaging exercise of his ministerial function, the preaching of the word of life. Where there is not faith there is either presumption or fear : the former is not the usual impediment to sound extemporaneous preaching, but the latter ; and where there is fear, there must be incompetency ; for the man is not himself. Fear, confirmed by want of habit, and preparatory education, and the apprehended disapprobation of a prevailing fastidious taste, seems to me to be the secret cause of all our written sermons : we are afraid of this defect, and the other inability : whereas grace would afford industry and simplicity to supply all our defects and inabilities, had we but faith to trust to the promise. Let the minister of Christ go forth in the strength of his Master. Let this be his motto, “ I will go in the strength of the Lord God, I will make mention of thy righteousness even of thine ’

¹ Matt. xxviii. 20.

² Luke xxi. 15.

only.”¹ Let him use due means to prepare himself for the occasion ; but not anxiously much less *ambitiously*. Let him prefer the praise of God to the praise of men. Let him endeavour to lay by self wholly, and to put on Christ ; let this be his prayer in all his previous meditation and preparation ; and when he enters the pulpit, let his chief prayer be, the full surrender of self that he “may be filled with all the fulness of God.”² And though like Moses he may decline the task through fear of incompetency, or like Jeremiah he may excuse himself by saying, “I cannot speak, for I am a child ;” yet faith shall derive assurance from the promise made to the retiring prophet, “Say not, I am a child ; for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces : for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord.”³ Let the minister be but “a child” in his own esteem, and he will be found “a man of God—thoroughly furnished”⁴ for the work committed to his charge. Faith will banish fear : new thoughts and illustrations will be suggested as he proceeds, or old combinations and associations of ideas will be brought forward for present use ; and while the general plan, and much of the filling in of the sermon

¹ Psalm lxxi. 16.

² Eph. iii. 19.

³ Jer. i. 6—8.

⁴ 2 Tim. iii. 17.

have been previously prepared, yet he will honour the promise of the Spirit by looking to him for aid, and entertain no doubt that, as his faith is, so shall his support be. And so far shall this ministry be from a lax and jejune exhibition of the word, that it shall be evidently a rich and spiritual repast, by, not the vocal only, but the vital acknowledgment of those who partake of it. The minister has studied to approve himself to God, and he shall be a workman not ashamed of his work ; neither shall his work be ashamed of him.¹

But you cannot expect all ministers to attain this extemporaneous perfection. No, "all men cannot do all things." But where is the man who with common talents, and common industry, educated upon this Baptismal reference to "his soul's health," warmed with the love of Christ, desiring the salvation of immortal souls, and supported by faith in the promise, whose piety and zeal may not express themselves in extemporaneous addresses to the Church of Christ ? Men will differ in this as in every other gift whether of body or mind ; but a respectable

¹ It is very evident that extemporaneous expression, like any other excellence, must be more or less the result of habit and education ; and were our education for Orders, more decidedly Clerical, as I believe it is in almost every other Church, why should not extemporaneous readiness of expression be cultivated, as well as other necessary qualifications for the most important, as it is the most sacred, of all functions ?

degree of extemporaneous facility may doubtless be thus acquired by most men, which, when compared with our present mode of pulpit address, might, with the blessing of the Spirit, by producing livelier sympathies and deeper interest in the souls of men, be productive also of a more spiritual community, than the Church has ever yet witnessed since the days of the Apostles.

And what are the obstacles which oppose this improvement of our pulpit ? They may all be reduced to one ; but for the sake of perspicuity, I will mention two.

The first is, that we are not content with " a respectable degree of extemporaneous facility " in the pulpit. A vitiated taste has been generated by our idolatrous regard for classical antiquity ; and our mythological education has insensibly introduced a false refinement, which will not tolerate the simplicity of plain Scripture sense, expressed in plain terms. We are the victims of fastidiousness : and the Church of Christ is pressed down under the weight of this excessive refinement, " as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves." ¹ A simple style will best express plain things. Parenthesis and circumlocution deprive expression of its edge, and the idea attenuated by frequent trope and figure, arrives at the mind of the hearer, like an arrow spent

¹ Amos ii. 13.

in its flight, and rather serves to amuse than to impress. But if "eloquence is vehement simplicity," how ill is this definition illustrated, by a style of preaching, in which neither matter nor manner are simple; and where is the vehemence which should characterise the earnestness of truth, in one tiresome round of polished period, and in one lengthy sentence succeeding another, impeded by frequent parentheses, and involving one sense within another, till distinctness of idea is lost in multiplicity of words. And if this excessive refinement too commonly vitiates the expression of the pulpit, is not either the unimpassioned, or the falsely impassioned *spouting and mouthing* manner of delivery, so frequently learned at our schools, and so unhappily prevalent in most public assemblies, and in the pulpit also, most unfavorable to simplicity? and yet are not these the fashion both of writing and speaking in this our day? How unlike is this to the sweetly familiar mode of address both of our Lord and his Apostles! Let the fastidious Christian world then abate its demands; let it descend from its supercilious height of false refinement. Had it more grace it would have more nature; it would prefer what is simple and natural to what is scholastic and refined. Let our preaching resemble the address of a Father to his children, from his arm chair of paternal authority and kindness; let the language be plain, and the manner approaching

that of conversation ; let the ordinary expression resemble that of common life, rising into “vehement simplicity,” with the dignity of its subject, and the importance of its results ; and when the flight is accomplished, let it descend to the level of common parlance, till another rapture elevate it to another flight. How strikingly is this illustrated in the epistles of St. Paul ! and can we believe that if such was the manner of his addresses to the primitive Church, and that he had occasionally been deficient in expression, or had hesitated for a word, that his audience would have reflected on his failure ? Even so let it be at the present day ; let ministers speak with simplicity, and let their people hear with simplicity ; and extemporaneous addresses will soon be heard from our pulpits. And surely that forbearance may well be expected from a Christian audience towards their minister, which a heathen Poet was willing to extend to written composition : he would willingly tolerate those failures which were not merely the result of the frailty of our nature, but even of hasty carelessness. Away then with the sensitive refinement of Greece and Rome ; and in the courts of our Zion, let the simplicity of a heavenly taste, banish the ambitious glitter of a deluded world. “ Excellency of speech,—and enticing words of man’s wisdom,”¹ were abjured as means

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 1.

of grace, by the most successful preacher of the Gospel ever yet known ; his ministry stood not in human power, or in the display of human talents, “ but in demonstration of the spirit and of power ” from on high : and if faith in a crucified Saviour is to be the end of our ministry, as it was of his, it is evident that “ no flesh shall glory in his presence,” but that the pride of human reason, and the fastidiousness of a scholastic taste must yield to “ the simplicity of Christ.”

The second obstacle that opposes this improvement of our pulpit is indeed that which includes every other—the spirit of the world.

“ The world ” will “ love his own,”¹ and from a “ world ” which “ lieth in wickedness ”² what can be expected, but a consistent effort, to defend itself from the intrusion of that truth, which, by convicting it of error, would interrupt its security. Hence it is, that earnestness in every earthly occupation and circumstance is considered as commendable and desirable, but that earnestness in religion is intolerable. A merchant may be earnest in his counting-house, and a tradesman at his counter ; a farmer in the field, and a shipman on board ; a statesman cannot be too diligent in the cabinet or the legislature ; or a lawyer too earnest in urging the claims of his client ; but a minister may be too earnest in the pulpit ; for it is his business to

¹ John xv. 19.

² 1 John v. 19.

call off the attention of men from that world which has their hearts, and to fix it on that world where their hearts are not. This is, I fear, the grand secret of the world's opposition to extemporaneous addresses in the pulpit; they come too home; they speak too plainly; they have too much of the reality of common life about them, to suit a worldly mind. The Sadducee will not hear them, for they would convince him of his infidelity; the formalist will not hear them, for they show him too plainly that he cannot claim heaven by the merit of his works. To the worldly man they are intolerable, for they rouse him from his delusion, that he can have as much of the world as he will during life, and as much of heaven as he will at his death. The scholar will not bear them, for they are as offensive to his moral as to his classical taste. The evangelical Christian complains of them, for his pride of heart has been so fostered by the prevalence of fashionable refinement, that he is not aware, how little either his principles or his practice raise him above the level of the world that surrounds him. Thus it is the domination of a worldly spirit, both within and without the Church, which agrees to proscribe the exercise of one of God's best gifts, in the execution of the most honourable office ever yet bestowed by God upon man. The world has set up a standard of eloquence of its own; no matter how offensive to nature, to sound sense,

and to genuine taste. It has one style for the common purposes of life, another for the pulpit; both are equally remote from simplicity. Introduce the civil eloquence of the world into the pulpit, and it will not bear even its own there; for it deems it out of place, as indeed it is. Introduce its own style of ministerial eloquence into the pulpit, and didactic orthodoxy, and preceptive morality, and pompous circumlocution, and unimpressive polish of language, and uninteresting monotony, must leave the Christian world in its present state of indifference and supineness; for the effect cannot exceed the measure of its cause.

It is the day of simplicity that we desire; and a simple pulpit will under God produce a simple people. May this be the character of every pulpit throughout the land: a simple tone of Gospel statement like that of the Seventeenth Article, a simple manner, simple language, and simple expression. And surely, if as ministers we gave ourselves wholly to these things; if "the word of Christ" dwelt in us "richly in all wisdom;"¹ and if the great subject, CHRIST CRUCIFIED, animated our hearts under prayer, and praise, and meditation, and every fostering means,—the frequent communion held with our people in the church, would be but the periodical discharge of the

¹ Col. iii. 16.

overflowing of a gracious heart, abounding with the love of God and man,—one unceasing effort, to enjoy, and to impart the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.¹

Such are the modes, My Dear Friend, which I would humbly suggest for carrying the above interpretation of our Baptismal Service into effect. Let every man be fully persuaded in his

¹ I have no doubt that many objections will be urged against that full enjoyment of Christian communion, which our meeting in the parochial church at least once in the day, would be the means of affording. But let it be remembered that this was the manner of the primitive Church, they continued “ daily with one accord in the temple; ” (Acts ii. 46) and also that of the Reformation. These were singular times, it may be said : they were indeed times of singular piety ; and one reason doubtless was, because singular means were resorted to, to maintain it. And if a whole parish, (or rather such of them as were able to attend the daily service) consisting of not more than a manageable number, were thus to meet daily in the church, with what comparative ease might it be managed ! The sick, the diseased, the distressed in body and mind, would be reported by their neighbours present to the Church, and effectual and instant relief might be administered. Thus also imposition would be detected, vicious habits corrected, and industry and piety encouraged. The Poor’s-rate would be soon found unnecessary, in a parish so ordered ; and charity and justice would go hand in hand together in alleviating human woe, and administering to human necessity. Thus Christianity would be suffered to assert her proper character : for it would be *practically* found that as “ the Communion of Saints ” was maintained, so every temporal blessing abounded throughout each social circle.

own mind of its justice and its excellency—Let him as a minister show this conviction by his own example—Let him explain it at large, and habitually, from the pulpit—Let frequent appeals be made to Parents and Sponsors and Children on the subject—Let it be insisted on in our schools—Let it be the subject of the minister's private conversation with his people—Let ignorant Sponsors be met, by the temperate use of the discretion allowed the minister in the twenty-ninth canon—Let the minister educate his own children upon this principle—Let the attention of the Church be especially challenged—Let the improved mode of treating children under this interpretation, operate as a means of its confirmation.—Let new means of explaining this interpretation be provided for children—Let the Church be frequently called upon to take an interest in her young—Let the font be restored to its place—Let the works of the Reformers be again offered to the attention of the public, and that attention be solicited by the institution of a Society for the purpose—Let a Periodical Work be established, for the express purpose of recommending that tone of Christianity which was entertained by the Reformers—And lastly let the Gospel of the Reformation in all its blessed unction, and simplicity, both of language and manner, sound from all our pulpits. Let these means so far as they are practicable, be carried into active

effect in every parish throughout the land ; and may we not hope for the blessing of the Spirit upon them, to produce the happiest condition of man now extant upon earth ? The world would then see, what it never yet saw, a community of natural men become a “ Communion of Saints,”—the promise of God in his gospel effecting its declared purpose,—the Sacraments producing their proper blessings, as the faith of the recipient applied them,—and the title of these letters would be fully verified ; for Infant-baptism would then be, as the prescribed, so the efficient means, of National Reformation.

And is there a man of piety throughout the land, who would not rejoice in such a condition of human existence ? Let him call himself by what name he pleased, Churchman high or low, Dissenter of every profession, could he hope for a more desirable state of things upon earth ? would not this be the mode to remove all scandal, to silence every objection, and to conciliate all dissent ? Then let every man of piety join hand, and heart, and prayer, and holy agency in so blessed a cause, and his “ labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.”

For do not the signs of these times encourage us to make some grand effort to meet their demands ? We live in no ordinary day ; and ordinary means can only defeat our expectations. “ Great deeds require great means of enterprize : ” and were our Established Church

to call all her noble energies into exercise, to act up to her principles, and to renovate her means; I see not in what respect she would be unequal to the demands of the day. And surely there is ample encouragement to rouse us to exertion: nay, the times have roused us to exertion in spite of ourselves; and I feel persuaded that by the blessing of God that exertion has acquired such a momentum, that every attempt to impede shall but accelerate its velocity. And is there not a cause? We are evidently fallen upon the latter days of the world—

“ Six thousand years of sorrow have well-nigh
Fulfilled their tardy and disastrous course
Over a sinful world.”

The groans of nature are drawing to an end; mind is surely rousing from its long torpor of prejudice and error, and though in many of its developements wild and unprincipled, and in others satanic and infidel, yet Bible truth has evidently attracted its attention, and is gradually consecrating it to God. The nations of the world are listening to the appeals of truth with more favorable ear than hitherto; and increasing means are providing, to meet the energies of an awakened world and to improve them.

The moral advance of society within the last thirty years, even within our own experience, gives encouraging earnest that the next

thirty years shall “show” us greater and mightier “things which”¹ we know not; and cannot yet anticipate. By general expectation the twelve hundred and sixty years are even now finished, or shall shortly expire; and the dead bodies of the two witnesses are rising in the street, and shall soon cast off their sack-cloth. The prayers of the Church during the six thousand years of her pilgrimage are receiving their accomplishment. The world is “remembering” itself, and is preparing to return to its God, that it may be his people; and the God of mercy is remembering his covenant, and acquitting himself of his promise that he will be their God. In a word the signs of the times concur in uttering one sound of preparation; and testify that the season is at hand, when a voice shall be heard to which all nations shall attend—COME, FOR “ALL THINGS ARE READY.”²

Let our means be proportioned then to the grandeur of our just expectations; at present they are confessedly unequal. How often have we lamented together the paucity of those who present themselves as missionaries; the waning state of some missions for want of zeal to supply them, and our utter hopelessness that any great missionary work will be accomplished, till Christians act in consistency with

¹ Jer. xxxiii. 3.

² Matt. xxii. 4.

their professions ; till Parents will propose the ministerial and especially the missionary character as the highest point of human excellence to their children, and teach them, that unre-served devotion of themselves in this work to God, is as infinitely superior to all that rank, and wealth, and station can offer to their aim, as heaven is to earth : that he is the most truly happy man whose life exhibits the nearest conformity to the will of God, and that the man who has been the means of saving one soul, has achieved a work, compared with which, all the temporal success of princes, and legislators, and statesmen, is as nothing.

Here then are means both adequate and ready ; means which carried into effect according to the design of our Church, and that of the great Worthies of the Reformation, would first under God evangelise our own population, and then that of the world. Every facility is afforded us for action : we have no preparatory process to arrange ; all is ready to our hands. The machinery is complete ; we have but to work it. We need no appeals to either spiritual or temporal authority : all this is not only acquired, but according to the constitution of our Church it is imperative on us to carry its Baptismal provisions into effect. What more can be wanting ? We have the promise of God for the basis of our system, the Sacrament of God for the means, the most simple administration of it

provided by our Church for our facility, and assured success for our encouragement: all is ready on God's part; all that is wanting is on ours. Faith, operative faith, faith which is spiritual power, is alone wanting: what the steam is to the engine, the water to the mill, the wind to the sail, such is faith to the Sacrament; it is the power which sets it in motion. Baptismal Regeneration is the lever which shall renew human society, if faith but apply its hand steadily and unceasingly to the work. God has done his part, the Reformers have done their part; let us do ours. Let us go forth in the strength of our Master; and however appalling present difficulties may appear, doubtless if on our return he should ask us, as he did his ministers of old, ; "when I sent you lacked ye any thing?" it shall be our privilege to answer with them—"nothing."¹

Is it the difficulty of the work that discourages us? Is this view of Baptismal Regeneration so novel in our day, and is the exertion to introduce it practically among our people so vast, as utterly to overwhelm us with despair? Assuredly experience does by no means warrant me in describing the labours of a ministry in the Church of England as light, or easy to be discharged. We speak of the labours of mission-

¹ Luke xxii. 35.

aries,—absence from their home and friends, the dangers of the seas and climate, the error, cruelty, lust, ferocity, obstinacy, and manifold abominations of benighted idolaters which they have to encounter: far be it from me to underrate the real magnitude of these labours; they are indeed great and terrific. But after all, I doubt much, whether a spiritual minister in the Church of Christian England, who is pursuing his ministerial course with a steady aim to advance the glory of Christ, and the eternal welfare of never-dying souls, according to the doctrine of "the Article," the spirit of the Baptismal Service, and the requisitions of our Church in her Ordination Services, has not full as arduous a duty to perform, as a missionary in any country, except one utterly uncivilized and barbarous. Take any ordinary parish in city, town, or county of this land; consider the common rate of character a minister has to address; the ignorance, the error, the prejudice, the worldly-mindedness, the selfishness, the fashionable Churchmanship, the proud morality, the prescriptive Christianity, the self-satisfied formality, the loose principles of adherence to the Established Church, the opposition of manifold dissent, in a word, the intractable material he has to deal with, in all its circumstances and conditions—and I doubt whether any modification of society, presents man in a more

unfavorable light to receive spiritual impressions, except that of a simply nomade state, than the self-complacent security of nominal Christianity presents in England at this hour. A faithful minister, it is true, will not have to dread the scalping knife of the Indian, or the kreeese of the Malay; but he will but very imperfectly have counted his cost, if he does not calculate upon the necessity of setting "his face like a flint,"¹ to meet the reproaches, the sneers, the insults, the opposition of those whose benefit he seeks, the half-heartedness of professors, the falling off of his original supporters, the cries of methodism, the charges of excess from his Brethren, the discountenance of authority, and the general reprobation of the world from without; and apprehensions, and doubts, and fears, and sorrows, and hesitations from within; add to these the expostulations of unspiritual relatives who cannot appreciate his principles, and perhaps even a suspension of intercourse with those, who are in nature dearest to his heart, and whom from earliest childhood he has been accustomed to reverence and love. Such trials every decided man of God, who would undertake the ministérial care of a parish even in this land, according to the requisitions of our Church, must be prepared to ex-

¹ Isaiah 1. 7.

pect. The reproach of the cross has no more ceased in England than it has in any spot of earth inhabited by man : human nature, however modified by civilization, is the same in every place ; and both the infidel world, the moral world, and the Evangelical world, around us, declare but too plainly, that if a minister would preach the cross of Christ, he must be prepared to bear it.

It is quite evident, My Dear Friend, that we must be first missionaries at home, before we can justly expect men to be raised up as missionaries to be sent abroad. A higher tone of preaching and practice, of ministerial faithfulness, and congregational communion must be found among us at home, before any great success can be looked for from our efforts abroad. And who indeed is sufficient for these things ? Who can thus unreservedly devote himself to God ? Who can, in the spirit of meekness which distinguished his Master, count the cost of the sufferings which must be borne, before the object is attained ? Who can endure unkindness that he may illustrate forgiveness, and avail himself of opposition, and contempt, and malignity, to show forth “ all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness ? ”¹ Who can not only surrender all hope of worldly preferment, but con-

¹ Col. i. 11.

tendedly expose himself to distance, to coldness, to reproach, and to exclusion, and enter upon a course never yet faithfully run but with privation, and labour, and sorrow ? Who, while he is possessed of a heavenly wisdom which the world cannot know, and engaged in a work on which Angels look with wonder, can be patiently esteemed as a fool, a madman, an enthusiast, a hypocrite, and treated as the offscouring of all things by the very world he is endeavouring to benefit ? And who, with a steady aim to save the souls of men, can pass unmoved through evil report and good report ; and while he is unwarped by the latter, can calmly calculate upon breathing the former as his atmosphere ; and rising above irritated feelings, and goading resentments, can consistently illustrate the great distinctive character of the Gospel of Jesus—can “ love ” his “ enemies, bless them that curse ” him, “ do good to them that hate ” him, and when driven by their persevering enmity from every other mode of blessing them, can “ pray for them which despitefully use him, and persecute ” him ? ¹

Yes, there is a man who can perform all this ; and that is the man of faith. Not only did our Great Exemplar perform it, but Paul, and Peter, and John, and those eminent men who trod in his steps : the declaration of one was the prac-

¹ Matt. v. 44.

tiee of them all, " and I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." ¹ It was faith that made them what they were, it is like precious faith that must make us the same.

Let us then go forth strong in faith. Let our parishes be undertaken with a missionary devotion of spirit : let our prayer be constant and fervent for a holy courage, for unfailing love, patience, forbearance, humility and zeal ; and let a consistent practice of pastoral devotedness exhibit these graces in action ; and where is the spot in this or any land, however barbarous or however refined, upon which, by the blessing of God, such a ministry shall not make an impression ? Zealous love and persevering patience in the work of the ministry, beget an irresistible weight of character, which eventually bears down all before it. Dispirited by opposition, the ministry of holy ministers is rather distinguished by passive retirement, than by the aggressive courtesies of a zeal which accepts no denial, and a love which admits no pause, and knows no end but the attainment of its purpose. In heathen lands, missionaries deem it their duty to address all indiscriminately, none high or low, ignorant or learned are excluded from their zealous application. Such is surely the design

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 15.

of our Church in committing the population of a given district to the charge of a particular minister. The system is beautiful, as it is complete ; and when it is animated by a truly missionary spirit in us the ministers of the Church, what a Church will the Church of England be ? Nor do I despair that such a season may arrive. The return of this morning of light must be gradual ; the change must be slow ; but only let the principles of these letters be applied, and the means carried into practice, and the issue is by no means questionable. Another day of Reformation may be granted to us ; and the Religion of Jesus, abundant in pastoral effort, and rich in the parochial and national " Communion of the Saints," may put forth graces bright as those which adorned the fairest hours of the Reformation, and

" Arise as in that elder time,
Warm, energetic, chaste, sublime."

May God of his infinite mercy, My Dear Friend, hasten that day : may we live to see the reign of the PROMISE ; or be blest in improving the means to advance it. Let our exertions be raised to no common degree of effort, for we are warranted in entertaining large and exalted expectations. It is the reign of the promise that we expect : let Baptismal Regeneration,

which is bottomed on the promise, be accepted in faith, and the work of renovation is spiritually and scripturally begun. And as faith honours the promise, so shall all the blessings of the promise be to us, and our children. Our Church shall thus be renewed in holiness ; all its springs and wheels of holy energy shall be set in motion ; union and concurrent effort shall then take place of dissent and disfraction ; every order of the State, and every condition of society shall acknowledge its renovating influence ; prayer and spiritual discipline shall abound ; the Spirit from on high shall smile in confirmation of the blessings he has produced ; the Saviour's honour shall be promoted in the reign of grace, as derived from the promise ; and the Father's love shall rejoice in the success of the gospel of his Son. Such a state of blessedness, the Church of England possesses at this hour the means of producing ; let us be but true to the means, and God will be true to his promise. And is it too much to say, that the general aspect of the times unites with the promise, in warranting the conclusion, that with the increased application of means we shall witness increased success ; till maturing grace shall produce mutual concession, and existing differences being merged in one combined endeavour to improve the means of our Church, the advantages of union under her banners shall be

so evident as to induce the general wish—ESTO
PERPETUA.

When the millenial day arrives it must be a day of order: now order implies law, law implies administration, and administration on earth implies human agency to effect it. And my soul delights in the heavenly anticipation of that day, when sin being subdued in every heart by the Spirit poured out from on high, union shall be so dear to all, that men shall be seeking, not the things in which they may differ from their fellows, but those in which they may agree. Let this temper but reign, and I have no fears for our Established Church; for as those within will then most cordially make the largest concessions to accommodate those that are without; so those without will be prepared to accede to the wish of the majority, and cordially yield their differences in favor of those that are within. Let grace but change the temper of our hearts for that of love, and I believe that one year would crown every Christian meeting-house with a steeple.

May God in mercy hasten this day of UNION. PROTESTANTS of whatever name! you have your old POPISH adversary on one side; whom your shouts have roused from his lair: are you prepared for his attack? You have an INFIDEL adversary on the other side, with malignities restless and unabashed, and purposes of exter-

mination, avowed, determined, and desperate.— You have a University in process in the midst of your population which excludes Christianity on principle, and this principle your DISUNION. A MIGHTY CONFLICT is nearer perhaps than we are aware of. Let each ask his conscience— “Am I rising above the littleness of Party? and am I sacrificing unimportant differences to establish that UNION which the interests of our COMMON CHRISTIANITY demand ? ”

And now, My Dear Friend, I cannot conclude, without thanking the Father of mercies for affording me, as I trust he has done, this view of the possible blessedness of our Church; and yourself as the occasion of recording the sentiments of these letters, and of proposing them to general consideration. I have to thank you under God, for many a sweet hour of holy anticipation, as my frequent prayers have consecrated these pages to God, to the honour of Christ, and to the benefit of our country. That country we both love ; and would fain see it put forth all the spiritual energies, with which God has distinguished it, as a blessing to itself, and that large portion of the world submitted to its controul. And were England true to herself, where is the land, which, though free from the controul of her arms, could be free from the influence of her virtues? I know well the laborious duties you have to discharge in sup-

port of missions ; and the ardour with which you would stir up a missionary spirit at home ; but to gratify your wishes, Semi-heathen must become Christian England, and estimate her own spiritual advantages better, before she can be active in extending them to others. And what reflecting Christian can justly expect either this improved principle or practice so long as our generally depraved education continues ? May God open our eyes to the large spiritual means he has provided for us, in his Baptismal Covenant, to correct this evil ; may faith apply this Sacrament in power ; and in this power may every Parent in the land present his child to the " Communion of the Saints " for Baptismal blessings ; and in the perseverance of the same faith consistently educate him as " a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor " of his kingdom.

I know not that I can adopt a more appropriate conclusion than the last words of Holingshed's History.

" And we beseech God to increase the multitude of loyal subjects, to make them strong in faith towards him, and in love one with another, that the Gospel (which is the doctrine of pacification and obedience) may be glorified in the commonwealth of England, A CORNER OF THE WORLD, O LORD, WHICH THOU HAST SINGLED OUT FOR THE MAGNIFYING OF THY MAJESTY,

and whereof we pray thee to give us a daily remembrance: so shall we make conscience of sin, and addict ourselves to the exercises of righteousness. Amen."

Believe me, My Dear Friend, in the faith, and hope, and love of the Gospel,

Your's most truly

And affectionately,

HENRY BUDD.

Bridge Street, Blackfriars,

May 18th, 1827.

END.

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a daily
science
exercise

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JDD.













